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THE THEATRE — ADVANCING

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THE THEATRE—ADVANCING

By
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"On the Art of the Theatre," "Towards a New Theatre," etc.

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PART I

A PLEA FOR TWO THEATRES

This Essay is Dedicated to the Tired Business Man

"Shun those studies in which the work that results dies with the worker."

LEONARDO DA VINCI.
MSS. South Kensington Museum, III.55.

I THINK we may listen to anything that Leonardo da Vinci says, and benefit, without indulging in that modern habit of getting peevish and arguing with every authority.

"Shun those studies —— in which —— the work that results —— dies with the worker."

To us of the theatre these words fall heavily, like a cold douche —— but I am tingling with the after effects.

I am a member of that faculty [1] which produces work, the results of which die with the worker. As such I do not at all like Leonardo da Vinci's warning, and this sets me thinking about my calling, the theatrical faculty. The results certainly die with the worker. Must I shun my studies because of that? I rub my forehead, which wrinkles at the thought. I am puzzled. Our work, then, is like —— like grass —— is that it? Which "*in the morning is green and groweth up, but in the evening is cut down, dried up and withered.*"

[1] The term "theatrical profession" has outlived its day: pompously called by some (not by us) "*the* profession": the older term was "the quality."

I am not a very patient being, and the spirit of Uncle Toby rises in me and I feel impelled to cry out, "By God, it shall not die!"

But before committing a big folly, let me first look about and see whether it be possible or no to make our work, if not eternal, yet in a great measure *durable*. Why is it that our two muses, Melpomene and Thalia, should be held to be so powerless? The other seven seem to have unlimited power — then why not ours? The other seven are perhaps jealous of the popularity of our two ladies. Perhaps we might make a compromise with these seven; we might say to them, "If we make a light and airy theatre which shall be offered up on your altar, will you not on your part allow us to create —— will you not, in fact, collaborate with our two ladies to inspire us in the creation of a durable theatre which shall last after we, the makers, are dead?"

And then it occurs to me that we are living in the twentieth century, and that it would be quite impossible for me to go and make this appeal to the oracle, and, through the oracle, to the muses; and that — hang me! if the position is as bad as it looked at the first glance!

After a moment's thought I realize that as this is the twentieth century it depends entirely upon ourselves whether or no we wish to make a durable theatre; and that if we wish to make it we can, without any peace-offering of our perishable theatre to the seven, such as I was proposing.

Pondering further, I ask myself, Why not make a durable theatre *and* a perishable theatre, even as there is a durable spirit and a perishable body?

Some one will tell me that we already have a theatre with body and soul, part perishable, part durable; that the player and the illuminations and the decorations and the dancings and the singings all pass, like the body, while the words of the poet live on like the soul. And they will say that it is the better part which lives and the inferior part which dies.

Now, I must be forgiven again for reminding you that I am a member of the theatrical faculty, and because of that I will stand my ground until the last shot is gone, and fight for that faculty. I will not consent to be talked to about the spiritual wonders of Shakespeare and Synge and Sheridan and so forth. I agree that their work is lasting and wonderful; but if the work we of the stage do cannot also be durable, I am going to get some distance towards the reason *why* it cannot be durable.

Some one will throw a sop to me saying, "But is the butterfly, because it is perishable, any less beautiful?" I am not concerned with that, or with any arguments in praise of the perishable. I am here concerned with the durable, and the question whether our theatre can be made so.

If it is in the nature of one work to be honoured because of its durable qualities, what is to prevent

those qualities being ours, so that our work may be honoured? I think it will be very difficult for any one to assert that it has no right to endure "because its nature is ephemeral." Until the diamond has passed through many stages in its development it also is ephemeral; but once having attained to a certain state it is extraordinarily durable.

In like manner, turning to the arts, we may find that sculpture is very perishable under some conditions and at certain stages; under other conditions it endures. The very man who warns us to "shun those studies in which the work that is done dies with the worker" made a statue which was the wonder of the time; but he made it in clay, and it was destroyed immediately; whereas I have in front of me a small bronze head of a Buddha which was made long before Leonardo lived and is still enduring. Therefore, if sculpture can be both perishable and durable, may not our work which is made with hands become durable if we develop it to that condition?

My reason for considering this question is not, as some of my exponents would suppose and record, that I am dreaming in Florence of a beautiful state to come, and am lost in a cloudy reverie. Nothing of the kind. What led me to these reflections was looking through a number of American newspapers, in which many plays given in the commercial theatre, in the so-called "art" theatres, in the vaudeville theatres and in the

open-air theatres were recorded by photographs, and a considerable amount was written about these productions; and I thought to myself that I had never seen such a display of *waste* in my life.

"Do they know," I thought to myself, "that if the sums of money that went towards these pasteboard patchwork pieces of what is honoured with the word 'art' were laid out in an orderly manner, with a due sense of responsibility and proportion, and with the conscience which belongs to men rather than to children, the world would be all the richer by possessing lasting works of art instead of a yearly rubbish heap higher than the Washington Memorial?" And as I write I still wonder — do people realize this?

Now, one other thing, so that you do not misunderstand me.

Please do not imagine that I am quixotically inclined; that I am wanting to run a tilt against the theatrical trades who supply the goods which ultimately pile up into this pyramid of trash.

The theatrical trades are like the troops in this campaign of ours to win through to a better theatre. We shall not lose one man more than is necessary. They are our first consideration, and it would be ultimately to the interest of theatrical tradesmen to deal in things of lasting value, which we know are worth very much more than those things which last but for the day.

Have you got it clear then?——that I will take my position only on a practical basis, and, from

that standpoint, will look towards a promised land——and do something to move towards it.

There is nothing unpractical, if you will consider for a moment, in hoping that one day a great president or a great churchman, wishing to pay a high compliment, may allude to something national as being "theatrical." Nowadays these highly-placed dignitaries employ the word "theatrical" when they wish to point to some blemish. Others follow their bad example.[1]

Now, let us consider what can be called a "perishable" theatre and what a "durable" theatre; and after that let us consider whether the present theatre which we have is either the

[1] Eleven examples of the misuse of the word "theatrical," and one example where it is used graciously:

TITLE	AUTHOR	PUBLISHER	PAGE
"The Flight of the Dragon"	Laurence Binyon	Murray	26
"Journal of the De Goncourt Brothers"		Heinemann	139
"Architecture"	W. R. Lethaby	Williams & Norgate	18, 251
"The Arts Connected with Building"	Various Writers	Batsford	79
"Nietzsche contra Wagner"	Nietzsche	Foulis	
"Art and Life"	T. Sturge Moore	Methuen	26
"Plays for an Irish Theatre"	W. B. Yeats	Bullen	Pref. xi
"Shelley at Oxford"	Hogg		
"Rembrandt"	Breal	Duckworth	32, 61
"Murray's Handbook to Central Italy"	Rev. H. Jeaffreson, M.A.	Murray, 1900–1907	35
"The Daily Mail" (*The Theatrical Kaiser*)	Leading Article		December 28, 1914
"Adventures of Tom Sawyer" ("and the theatrical gorgeousness of the thing appealed to him")	Mark Twain	Tauchnitz, 1876	142

This last writer, the American Mark Twain, is the sole writer among these whose words imply something courteous; the rest use the term as a reproach. I can give the names of numbers of other writers and their books wherein this word "theatrical" is used in the derogatory sense instead of justly.

one, the other, or neither. So that lastly we may arrive at the chief reason for going into this question.

A DURABLE THEATRE

"I am in the hearts of all. Memory and Knowledge and the loss of both are all from Me. There are two entities in this world, the Perishable and the Imperishable. All creatures are the Perishable and the unconcerned One is the Imperishable."

BHAGAVADGÎTÂ.

What is a Durable Theatre? We shall have to imagine one as none exists.

First of all it would contain a durable Drama. Not a number of fairly durable dramas; one Drama, unchangeable. Such a drama would have to be beyond criticism, and would have to be what they assert the Shakespearean drama is——for all time. To be more durable than the Shakespearean drama it is likely that it would have to be religious. Religious dramas, if not played in London or New York, are still alive and being enacted in many quarters of the globe, and have lived for very many centuries. Perhaps not because of the religions themselves, but because of the vitality and nobility in the works.

A glance at the history of the Drama will give you examples. But it is more than likely that if we to-day in the twentieth century produce a drama we shall want it more durable than any of those.

It is possible that this drama might take a week to enact. It is possible that it might take a month. I will go so far as to say that it might possibly take three hundred and sixty-five days.

Saying this shows you that I do not mean a drama which complies with the conditions laid down by Aristotle and broken by his pupils. I am trying to think afresh, although it may occur to some of you that I have thought of nothing new; for, considering more curiously, we might find just such dramas already in existence. We think the Panama Canal is a new idea; but no doubt if we were to search, we should find its parallel three thousand years back. But no one laughs at the idea of the Panama Canal just because it is so vast; therefore, when the day comes and the men appear with the drama lasting three hundred and sixty-five days, we must not scout it because its proportions are immense.

The Drama, the Durable Drama, must deal with Truth[1] (or Reality——if you prefer at

[1] Truth. But what is Truth? Shall we waste three more centuries trying to find an answer to this idiotic question? Would it not be better to get along with our work, and to work so hard at the preparation for the representation of the drama dealing with truth that, when it arises, we are ready? Again, may not our very activities in preparing for the work produce the answer so much hankered after? Instead of hanging about and hankering, let us get on with our work so that exercise may quicken the longing and fill up the time usefully. All the old truths give way and become the modern lies; the Greek, the Elizabethan and all these modern truths which seem to aspire to be called the truth of doubt; these too will pass and become lies. I see no durability in the collection of modern plays wherein everything is doubted, from the power of God to that of a penny whistle. Had Penelope sat down and doubted as to the return of Ulysses the house would have been in a nice state on his arrival! Patience!

first so to call it) and not with fantastic things.

As my other writings show, I lean towards the drama of silence just because I believe in and long for a durable drama. And I cannot help but still believe that the most durable drama will be one of silence.

Still, I have in the course of my experience come across what I believe to be a written drama, which has, I should say, the durability of an æon.

The drama must be universal so that there will be no desire to destroy it on the part of any one nation. It must be everybody's property — yours and mine.

PLACE

What of the place in which such a drama would be preserved?

It will be called the Theatre, but it will not resemble any theatre known to us in history, in ancient times, or now.

I take it that the theatre itself will be architecturally as superb in its strength as the noblest pyramid known to us. There may be one or a hundred examples of this theatre, but all will be alike in general form if not in detail. I take it also that it will be built of the most costly materials, our care being lest we tarnish or spoil it in any way.

A walk through Florence or Venice would show us places erected durably to record the acts or

thoughts of men, and we should find many noble buildings. I would not urge that we should take our measure from such as these. We should surpass them. It is possible, or nothing is possible; and we can remember that the Church of Saint Mark at Venice is a noble place; the Baptistery in Florence maybe is a nobler. Doubtless they became so through the desire of men to build shrines in which durably to record things they held precious.

The size is not of paramount importance; but, great or small, it must be precious if it is to be durable.

I cannot persuade myself that we could ever reach an age in which we shall cease to value rare and precious materials. The cock in the fable found nothing valuable in the pearl, but at present we are not living in a farmyard, and there is no reason why, with care, we should come to do so. A durable theatre would help to postpone that day indefinitely.

But do not let us be vague about these materials. Let us name them —— gold, silver, copper, bronze and other precious metals; diamonds, emeralds, rubies and other precious stones; lapis-lazuli, crystals, ivory, ebony, malachite, marble, mosaic, glass stained with precious colours, silks finer than we have yet made; and all these things in the hands of men who delight to touch them and work with them.

To decide upon the general form of this build-

ing many minds would coöperate; and, after the general form was once established, the thousands —tens of thousands—of artists, craftsmen and so forth, the workmen and the tradesmen, would bring their powers to bear upon the details.

The broad lines would be laid down; there could be no departing from them; they would be clearly defined, not rambling or cramped, but each would bear the impress of each individual master.

Were there many theatres, the stage of this one could differ from the stage of that within certain limits, and the requirements would dictate those limits. After that everything would be free, so that the invention of the architect would find free play.

Just to give an example of what I mean we have only to look at the chancel, the pulpit, the cross, the rood-screen, the lamps and the candelabra of a cathedral. These are but a few objects among many, and in Asia, in Europe, in America and in Africa the requirements have dictated the broad lines. Within those requirements what a range of liberty the artists have had!

Or, if you wish for another example, we can think of a ship. You cannot, in designing a ship, dispense with, or get away from, the general form of the keel; it is impossible; but you may have as many different keels as there are different leaves to different trees.

In what we call the Decoration of our theatre, I mean the stage decoration together with the lighting and the costumes, all would be just as durable and as precious as the building itself. There would be no attempt to produce what we call "theatrical illusion." For instance, we should not paint a tree, or put up an imitation tree so as best to copy in colour and texture a real tree. No more than in a cathedral they put up a wooden copy of the original cross. Doubtless the cross on which the Saviour was crucified was an ordinary and rough wooden structure, but when it reaches the cathedral it becomes a precious work of art, in no way realistic.

Why do they make this transformation? Because it is too good a thing ever to be imitated; because it would be said they were pretending to put up the real cross. Every one realizes this in relation to an object made holy by thought.

What is to prevent us from treating a tree, than which as part of Divine nature there is nothing more holy — and, what is more, more joyous — in a like manner? Not that we should allow even the symbol of a tree to appear on our stage merely as something to look at; unless the drama demanded the presence of such a symbol, no tree should be put there. But if there is to be a tree, or a fountain, or a fire, we shall have to be made aware by the majesty of each that each one is of paramount importance, and this can only be done by fashioning symbols —— in each case

something suggesting and standing for the real thing. And let me repeat it — made in precious materials.

And the vestments. To convince you that costumes can be worth preserving, I need but take you to Notre Dame at Paris or to Cologne Cathedral, where they guard gorgeous vestments of gold and silver cloth, jewelled and embroidered into priceless works of art, or point to the dresses of the ancient Japanese Theatre where the NÔ was and is still performed. To make so well that each following century desires to preserve what has been so well done —— that should be the natural way of making such dresses as we need in our Durable Theatre.

LIGHTING

The lighting of our stage and our auditorium, what of that?

Shall we install the electric light? Well, the electric light is one of the wonders of to-day, and not its least wonder is its great beauty. But there is something very distasteful about the wires. Perhaps we shall arrive at a wireless electric light. Anyhow, to exclude the electric light because it is up to date would be far from my purpose, which is not to avoid what is up to date, but to secure what is *best*. Still, the sun is no bad illuminant. Daylight has not had its day.

PERFORMERS

And the performers? What of the actors, as they are called, and very well called? Do not fear that I am going to spring an Über-Marionette into the midst of them. If he arrives it will be no case of my bringing him there, but because no one can prevent him from coming. I have no desire to thrust forward an unwelcome Frankenstein into the midst of such durable and precious things as we have already arranged for. It is likely that the drama of which I have spoken will demand the services of man as performer; I have been told (since I wrote of the Über-Marionette) of a race of actors that existed (and a few to-day preserve the tradition) who were fitted to be part and parcel of the most durable theatre it is possible to conceive. When I heard of this I was astounded, pleasurably astounded. I was told that this race of actors was so noble, sparing themselves no pain and austerely disciplining themselves, that all the weaknesses of the flesh were eradicated, and nothing remained but the perfect man. This race was not English or American, but Indian.

I am not sceptical. I would sooner be proved wrong in all my beliefs and theories than think man unable to rise to any standard known or to be known.

And so I accept this information, new though it be to me, and will present it here as a possibility;

I will hope for it, even with my eyes and ears amazed at what they see and hear coming from the Western actors.

If the Western actor can become what I am told the Eastern actor was and is, I withdraw all that I have written in my essay, " On the Actor and the Über-Marionette."

Strange that this Eastern land, so believing in the power of man to become divine, should make so many idols——so many beautiful idols—— for idols are Über-Marionettes.

In the event of man being unable to return to that ancient standard of the East, there is nothing open for us but to fashion something to represent man in this creative and durable art which we are contemplating.

What I have just described on broad lines as the Durable Theatre will not greatly illumine the mind of any man in a great city to-day who is unable to detach himself from his surroundings. This explains my dedication. Even an artist may have daily duties to attend to, and I can conceive nothing more irritating, when in the midst of such distractions, than to be talked to about a durable theatre.

But we all of us go away to the country now and then. We sometimes go fishing on the lakes, or climbing mountains, and sun and wind and skies refine and quicken the mind. I am inclined to believe that in no one is it more acute than the

city man whose daily occupations, year in and year out, are like those of a galley slave. He is chained to his oar at which he tugs and tugs and tugs. I know big business men who have told me their desire to be freed from those chains, yet have admitted their inability to know how to free themselves.

And we must not forget that it is *we* for whom they are rowing. We sit at ease in deck chairs while their sinews are cracking and their hearts ——But, as I say, in the country, returning to Nature for a while, their greater longings are liberated, and it may be that our Durable Theatre will be built near those places to which they go.

And now we will speak of the Perishable Theatre.

THE PERISHABLE THEATRE

When speaking of the Perishable Theatre I do not want anybody to imagine that I use the word "Perishable" as implying something hardly worth consideration. I use it so as to distinguish it from the Durable Theatre, to place it apart; not that it is inferior to the Durable Theatre, only that it is different.

Neither would I like my readers to imagine that by a perishable theatre I mean the present theatre.

As an aid to imagining such a theatre one needs but to recall the different periods of theatrical art,

to seize upon those parts which are least stable, most evanescent; picture them more unstable, more evanescent; and we have an idea of the thing.

For instance, let us take the same order as we did in considering the Durable Theatre.

First, the drama.

All would have to be spontaneous. If it were a play of words it would have to be improvisation. If dancing, very much "go as you please", as in the folk dances; if singing, it would have to be improvised too: in the cases of spoken play and sung play, or opera, we have plenty of precedent to go upon. In Italy in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries they were masters of the art of improvisation, and, as a proof of how perishable this improvisation was, there is really little more than the comedy of Molière which records it; and in Molière of course the dialogue is highly polished and finished, brought almost to a durable state.

To some extent we find a light form of the perishable play in the vaudeville performances of to-day. I have said "light", and refrained from saying "inferior" for the good reason that I do not think them inferior. If those who question this will try to improvise even to the extent that the vaudevillists do, they will find it such a difficult task that I think they will change their minds if ever tempted to dub it "inferior."

We find a considerable amount of improvisa-

tion in the circus also, at least in the old-fashioned circuses — newly furbished up as they may be — that we meet with in Europe. I do not know what those are like that one meets with in America, but imagine they can do as well in the improvising line.

I have taken the trouble now and then hurriedly to write down the conversation between the clowns in a circus, and to a great extent it resembles the conversations in Molière; in essentials the method is practically the same, but when recorded the result is anything but funny. The point made at the end is always the thing on which they are counting to convulse their hearers, and the rest is all preparation to get them into an expectant state of mind.

I myself have never heard any singers improvise, but I have heard some instrumentalist musicians who roam about the streets of Florence in the spring and summer evenings who do improvise, and sometimes do it well enough to convince any unbeliever that such a thing is not an impossibility.

I think it is unnecessary to mention the East when speaking of the possible development of Western art; not that I am wanting in respect for what the East possesses and can produce; but there is a danger in becoming too early acquainted with a matured foreign development of an art which should be evolved afresh from one's own soil.

After working for many years and searching for ways and means to create what at last comes clearer into vision each day, one can with more safety venture into the East to gain encouragement and assistance. But for the present we will leave it out of the discussion, although doubtless improvisation is practised continually in many parts of Asia.

I think that those who improvise dramas should limit themselves to light subjects which they do not mind losing; to improvise on the theme of Romeo and Juliet, or Coriolanus, of Julius Cæsar, or the Pharaohs, would seem to be out of tune; probably this is why clowns unconsciously select scenes of robbing their neighbors or making them fall over a hidden wire, these petty assaults being things which can be forgotten as soon as done; but the murder of Julius Cæsar or the burial of one of the Pharaohs is not a thing which any seriously flippant man would wish to forget in a hurry. For my part, although it is a digression to say so, I think that only a flippantly serious man would select such themes for the Durable Theatre either. How rightly they belong to the present-day theatre which is neither durable nor ephemeral!

Although the main theme of the comic improvisators is "doing" another man, the incidents are varied and the by-paths many. And the moral of the whole is always good, for it is the fool who pretends to be wiser than the other fool

who invariably gets "done" because he wishes to show his superior wisdom.

It is seldom elegant, this comedy, and yet a perishable theatre would have to possess its improvised dramas that were elegant and even exquisite. Perhaps here we should drop speech and pass to the dance, care being taken to avoid anything like a dance of a priestess before the altar of love, lest the little boy in the corner should giggle —— through good taste.

But dances based upon the movements of the perishable things in nature —— the ugly little insects and the more beautiful insects; in fact the whole short-lived creation; and, perhaps, the passing phases of childhood; even the brittleness of toys suggests itself as a theme. Not only the fact that a thing is perishable but that it is mutable is of value.

THE PLACE

Architecture does not come into this question of place for the ephemeral theatre. Its drama could be performed in any and every place, and caprice and phantasy might put together stages one more fantastic than the other. Something like a house of cards, with the suggestion that, should we lean against it, it would topple over. It needs nimble invention more than profound imagination, so I am almost tempted to suggest that a woman might be able to invent this stage, for there is something of the bonnet — something of

the well-shaped, well-trimmed bonnet or hat about it. Builders might have to be called in, but the imagination is sprightly, like a serious tight-rope dancer. Her mind would turn with revulsion from cold marble, bronze would not enter into her thoughts; but basketwork, trellisses, impossible winding flights of steps which would give way under the first heavy tread. And then beautiful diaphanous silks as sparingly used as on Sunday in Hyde Park, some beautiful embroidery, still more beautiful jewellery, and plenty of it to change day after day.

Cannot you imagine a stage held up by supports as thin as storks' legs, trimmed with the plumage of birds, and here and there a long string of pearls hanging? Powder, beautiful powder all over the floor, perfumes —— but here I am taking in not only the place but the scene, costume and all.

Little tapers of the finest wax. Not enough tapers? —— Then bring in a thousand more in silver sticks. No, I think we will have crystal. Each candle perfumed, and perfuming the air as it burns. Such a quantity of beautiful lace, everything spick and span —— and perishable.

And on to this stage and into this scene enter the actors.

Nothing so elephantine as those dubbed "the marvellous dancers of Russia"; nothing so heavy as "the diaphanous Grecian dancers"; but just something frail — always something fragile —

pale. I fancy them never speaking above a whisper; always singing, as it were, with the mutes on.

But here I am picturing one perishable theatre, though there might be the rougher kind wherein even lath and plaster, and certainly paper, could play their parts; with sand instead of powder, fishers' or fowlers' nets instead of lace, torches instead of perfumed candles. But one need not go far with eyes and ears in one's head to pick out the myriads of perishable things of this world and bring them to our service; and even with the least exercise of imagination, sitting in your chair, you can conjure up numbers of useful resources.

Thus I have sketched in a few lines these two theatres, the Durable and the Perishable. The ephemeral is the work of young people, and the durable is theirs also, when they shall have passed through youth.[1] Thus the one would be a train-

[1] One of the unfortunate things in the modern theatre is that young people always commence with the blood-thirstiest of tragedies and the gloomiest of melodramas. A young man of twenty leaps to the story of Sardanapalus or Agamemnon as a cat goes to cream, and on these monstrous themes he exerts all the delicacy of adolescence. A modern young lady reaches with haggard eyes towards the story of Electra, and acting it, displays all the tragic intensity of sweet seventeen. These boys and girls ought to be concerned only with the delicate and exquisite perishable themes in their exquisite theatre.

It is our fault they go to weep and gnash their teeth with Electra or frown and groan with Agamemnon. We tell them they have to grow up soon and be serious — not to do such and such a thing and to do something else; whereas we should beg of them to be anything but serious, we should beg of them to be joyous; whatever they do they are not to stop and think but to keep active, to act; instead of which we ask them what they were doing yesterday, and they instantly trip over the carpet and say "Nothing!" Then when they get back to their rooms they rush to Agamemnon and Electra in

ing for the other. Instead of quickly attempting a thing beyond their powers they should begin with the playful phase, and if in ten years they had tired of it — as tire they would — they should be able after this early experience, and if they still loved the theatre very much, to enter on a new and inspiring phase of their development, entering the Durable Theatre after having passed through the perishable one.

The theatre (especially such a theatre as I have sketched) educates; not in the sense in which the word is generally used; you will not educate young people by taking them to a theatre to see stupid, clumsy and ill-begotten things done in front of their eyes, but it will be an education *to give them a place* in which they can play and expend all their vitality and delight us into the bargain.

And now what of the present theatre?

THE PRESENT THEATRE

I intend here only to consider the present theatre in relation to the two other theatres under discussion — the Durable and the Perishable.

It is a negative affair at best, this present

order to find out why fathers and mothers are so funny and the life of children so miserable.

Here I offer a theatre for youth, a place for their invention and absurdities, and we can be sure that their absurdities will contain excellent wisdom; only we must leave them the place and give them the opportunity, and beg of them not to bother about how much it costs; and then all things, let alone theatres, will cost us very little indeed in comparison.

theatre. It has not durable qualities, neither will it perish sufficiently quickly. It costs as much as would a durable theatre, yet endures only a few years. The public of the present theatre is in love with the latest thing, and spends millions of money in order to have one glance at it; then tosses its head and asks for a still later thing. In fact the present theatre is the triumph of an effete public.

What remains of the extraordinary productions given to the public by the late Sir Henry Irving, who spent lavish sums on the present theatre? For instance (not to speak of any great sum), what remains over of his season at the Lyceum ending on July 31, 1880? The money taken was fifty-nine thousand pounds, and Irving always spent all his money on his work. What remains over of the gross receipts of "King Arthur"—£39,361.1.0? What remains over from fifty-three performances of "The Merchant of Venice", which realized £29,056.11.2? Or from the gross receipts from two hundred and forty performances given in America in 1886, bringing in the sum of £116,516.16.9; or, in dollars, $563,941.50?

Or take Irving's expenses on his eight American and Canadian tours. They amounted to the following sum—£591,347.5.11. A great sum of course would go to the actors——and what is there to show for the rest? In dollars it amounts to $2,862,120.90——*over half a million pounds sterling, or nearly three million dollars.*

The name of Irving is very great, and no one respects his memory more than I do; but except for his name, what is there remaining over?

These are Henry Irving's gross receipts and his expenses from 1876 to 1905:[1]

Receipts	£2,261,687. 10. 1.
Total expenses . . .	£2,168,290. 6. 1.
Net profit	£93,397. 4. 0.

I am not quoting these figures in order to suggest that they were more than Henry Irving should have received. For my part I wish he had received five millions and the National Theatre into the bargain. It is what should have been done for the sake of the swagger of the British nation, more than for the sake of Irving. Nor do I quote the figures in order to suggest that the money was badly handled in comparison with other modern theatres. It was used lavishly, for the stinginess which has come upon the English theatre of late years was then not dreamed of.

I would only draw attention to the expenditure which, as you see, exceeded two million, and remark that there is nothing to show for that two million. There is no theatre of beautiful proportions containing a stage equipped for the benefit of succeeding generations; there is no museum, no library, nothing. As it is not to be supposed that an ounce of the great Irving personality would have been lost had these things been built,

[1] See "Life of Henry Irving", by Austin Brereton.

collected, and preserved, why was something not done? I will tell you why.

It was not possible because the public prefers to be made to pay. Had Irving asked England and America, in the course of twenty years, to supply him with one million pounds sterling in order that he, as the best actor of his age, might erect for them a theatre which should be even as durable as the Comédie Française (Molière's theatre), the queer thing is that he would have been refused that sum.

But see what Irving does. He determines to get that sum and more —— and he gets it. But he gets it under conditions which make it less easy to establish such a theatre. He makes the people pay him over two million, you see, and he does it — if we omit his own great personality and genius — by carrying round trainloads and boatloads of scenery and costumes, armour and appliances which, if still in existence, must cost more to store than their actual value.

It is likely that there are some handsome swords, jewels, and other things in existence, probably more handsome than those left by any other actor; but have any of them a value as works of fine art? Whereas there is hardly a little church in all Europe and Asia that does not contain some priceless piece of silver work or gold work or ivory work, some piece of sculpture, or some robe; in short, some fine work of art.

Do you see what I mean?

If you hold that some theatrical properties are fine works of art, then I have nothing to say. I refer you to the experts of the auction room. They are things of sentimental interest and in some cases are of good quality; but nothing more.

I have in my possession one or two masks carved in Japan and one or two carved in Africa. These have a great value as works of fine art, and an ever-increasing value commercially.

I have on the other hand a pair of gloves worn by Henry Irving in one of his Shakespearean productions. They are nicely made gloves lined with nice silk, and on the back of the hand and on the cuff is good theatrical gilt tinsel with some cheap imitation stones. They have a sentimental value and are what is called "interesting", even as a glove of Napoleon would be interesting. But compare this pair with a glove worn by Queen Elizabeth, and they are bits of trash. Queen Elizabeth's glove is a work of art.

Again, I have one of the belts worn by Henry Irving in "Hamlet", with large jewelled plaques on it and the whole covered with a black net. It is a thing I am very fond of; but compare it with some belt preserved in the crypts at Notre Dame or in the Bargello at Florence, and the value of the theatrical one hardly amounts to that of a row of pins. The others are precious things, durable, valuable, works of art, and are also good investments.

The fact that Irving's "Hamlet" belt is more

effective on the stage than would be the belts in the Bargello only proves one thing —— that the present theatre aims at "effectiveness" at all costs, and does not care whether what is seen on its stages are works of fine art or not. In fact, as you see, it prefers what is called the "fake" to the genuine. The fake "tells"; the genuine falls short of theatrical "effect." (See Nietzsche, "The Case of Wagner", p. 35.)

And here we come to the two words which best sum up the theatre as it is, and the theatre as it should be.

Instead of the fake we should have the genuine.

If every stage thing cannot be precious —— though I see no reason why before long it should not be —— let it at any rate be unpretentious. Is there anything more annoying to us all who are working in this New Movement than to see these gilded plaster theatre interiors? If the gilt plaster had something inspiring in its form, then we would perhaps set aside the question of the gilt and the plaster and accept it for its expressive form. But it has not one quality that is good about it. The theatre at present is just a pretentious place and likely to foster pretension in those who frequent it.

There has been a movement for several years among architects to give us theatres of a different form, using different material, with an attempt at what some call simplicity, and so forth. It began with Wagner, and it seems to be developing

well. But their tendency is to become what is called "artistic" and to create a new pretension. These theatres get built somehow without inspiration and without a reason and are expressionless. Some system, some happy or unhappy idea is followed, and it all ends in being no better than the gilt and plaster palaces of old.

But lest you should imagine that I object to the elaborate or to the artificial, because these are generally most pretentious, let me cite one instance where both exist in the same theatre and seem to me splendid. In Parma there is the theatre built by G. B. Aleotti and completed in 1619, called the "Teatro Farnese." Perfect in splendour, without being a perishable theatre, without being a durable theatre, it is typical of all the best that should have survived in the present theatre but is rapidly disappearing. It has received the touch of genius from the man who built it. But genius is absent from the modern theatre — is not allowed to touch it into life — so, who cares whether it endure or perish?

Practical people should consider the enormous waste which goes on year after year, and ask themselves whether, instead of it, they cannot see their way to have the Durable Theatre and the Perishable Theatre, without spending a penny more. Thus they would have their cake and eat it. I believe this is possible.

One last word on the present theatre.

Although it is but the lees of the wine of our

old theatre, still in that old theatre I was cradled —— and I am helping to nurse a new theatre. If the New Movement does not regard affectionately — very affectionately — that old theatre, I shall be sorry that I ever nursed the new one. What was good in the old theatre must be preserved, and those of the New Movement must try to learn what those dear remains signify. There is something good in every theatre —— something, not everything. By accepting as gospel all the old theatre said and did (and all it omitted to say and do) we have reached the present unfortunate situation.

If the "Motion Picture", as it is called, is closing our theatres and taking away performers from the theatres —— and you have only to study the American theatrical journals to note this slow but steady leakage —— it is due to some weakness in the theatre. Good, then, that our old stage should pass away. Our new stage is alive even if very young.

I pray that we shall not sit down like those previous to this war and pooh-pooh the idea that anything is wrong in the theatre. Let us realize what is wrong and that we have not another minute to lose in putting it right.

"And why don't you propose something practical?" some one will ask. Let me answer with Jean Jacques Rousseau where he says: "All people are always telling me to make practical suggestions." And he goes on to say, "You might

as well tell me to suggest once more what people are already doing, or at least to suggest improvements which may be incorporated with the wrong methods at present in use —— in that way the good becomes corrupted and the bad is none the better for it." And he adds still further, "I would rather follow exactly the established methods than adopt a better method by halves."

Right! And we must have two new theatres; we cannot patch up the old one. My proposal, then, is that we plan for the ages to come two theatres — the Durable Theatre and the Perishable Theatre.

And remembering Leonardo's warning to "shun those studies in which the work that results dies with the worker", let us make up our minds to show courage and reply — "Not so! Proceed with any study which you LOVE and determine to make the work that results endure and outlive æons of decay."

FLORENCE, 1915.

NOTE. I wish to call the attention of those financiers who like to spend their money lavishly on modern theatricals to the passage referring to the wasted two million pounds (ten million dollars) and to beg them to consider whether they would not prefer to have their names preserved in more durable material. And I wish to call the attention of all legislators to the whole question: Shall there be waste or economy?

THE MODERN THEATRE, AND ANOTHER

"To the existence of art, to the existence of any aesthetic activity or perception whatsoever, a preliminary psychological condition is indispensable; namely, ecstacy."

NIETZSCHE.

IT is unnatural, the modern theatre. It is altogether unnatural; is there any doubt about it?

Is it not unnatural for us to be forced to wait till night to enjoy an art?

Is it not unnatural to sit two and a half long hours on one seat —— a ticketed seat, a numbered seat, crushed in on all sides by strangers?

Is it not unnatural to enter a place with fear, and look round at the multitude with fear, to walk up to your place fearfully, and to sit down talking rather loudly because you are frightened? Is not such fear unnatural?

Is it not unnatural that you look on to an artificial stage which is not even invested with a natural artifice nor even with a real artificial artifice?

Is it not unnatural of us to bear all this without a murmur, to hear a shout which goes out in praise to the silliest things, and to remain silent through fear?

Is it not unnatural, that sigh of relief as we perceive a danger which has been avoided? Is this not unnatural?

And is it not unnatural on our part to praise every little performance, to *pretend* even there and also to pretend that pretence? The rouge is not dabbed on artificially as a frank artifice—— it *pretends* to be natural nowadays.

How great a fault!

We the audience, and they the players, are forced to this pretence by the cruelest of deities that savages ever chose to be their master—— "Pretension." We are in no natural condition in the theatre, not at ease, neither are we relaxed, nor do we find relaxation. At best it can be said that sometimes we achieve a pretended and external relaxation.

It is because of this that I once said to an inquirer that I hoped some day to see the theatre in the Turkish bath. Some of the French journalists who came across this statement wrote about it; to them it was a "comic reform." But it is not so comic as they pretend. In the Turkish bath you become relaxed. The fearful noises and the as fearful stillnesses and stiffnesses of modern existence are removed.

You are there now. You have bathed and you have passed some length of time in that quiet resting-room, broken only by the natural noise of running water; you are physically in the finest possible condition; your senses are tuned up to

the right pitch. Now is the condition in which you can receive all good things which stir up the imagination through the senses. Well then, what shall we see? What shall we hear? Let it be drama and opera.

A heavy curtain closes over the central arch. The light is shut out, all but those long soft rays which shoot from side or ceiling upon the tiled pavement: an attendant passes without a sound, and as he goes there rises a sound of singing —— the opera has begun. Afar off, unseen persons raise their voices in unison —— it is the first chorus. The lights seem to grow less: now some one who loves —— something or somebody, or all things and all bodies —— begins to sing —— unseen; and whilst he sings, the notes of a reed pipe seem to follow him —— to *follow* not to run beside him —— to follow him in the guise of all those things which follow attraction. What is it we discern in the notes of this pipe? Some of us think it is a flight of birds, another may think it is a fountain, a new source of a new river breaking through the earth. Some think of the waves reaching up to the shore, and then some will think it is the quickened beat of the pulse. It will be none of these and all of them. It will be merely something moving, in harmony, in vain, and in despite. But while voice and pipe sing, it will seem as though both were moving away. At last a pause. You can count ten slowly. What has happened? Nothing.

The chorus bursts out from the other end of the building: doors seem to open, and something surprising rushes into the place. The light fills the room slowly, as slowly as the chorus swells rapidly. The song and the sound increase and increase and then die slowly out.

The opera has ended——we have fallen asleep.

Or, we long to witness a drama. Then are we in another resting-room. The attendants draw aside a thin veil, and disclose a long low window in which we seem to see a whole city. Quite silent yet sunny, it seems far outside the place in which we lie, where all is dark and drowsy. Outside it is all gay——white and blue; the sun strikes across the corners of the roofs, moving and falling here and there like something liquid: we see no little street, we see a whole city. Then, in whispers, the Drama of the Marionettes begins.

In whispers, not of the stage but of the poet's mouth. The little figures move about; they don't know we see them, we know they don't see us. All is grave or gay. Not one thing alone, but many things are happening; not one man alone, but many men are feeling; not one woman, but many women, many children! Hush!

> "The world is so full of a number of things,
> I'm sure we should all be as happy as Kings."

To be as happy as kings——like kings——is the art of the Marionette.

Wisdom has often been whispered, a poet has told us. The whispering grows and grows. Now all is silent once more.

The Drama of Wisdom has ended.

We are asleep.

FLORENCE, 1913.

IN DEFENCE OF THE ARTIST

THE artist is incomprehensible only because his thoughts and actions are natural. The popular conception of the artist is a wrong one.

Art may not be for Art's sake, but the artist is certainly for the artist's sake. That is to say, he is selfish to the core.

He seeks for happiness —— and finds it. Can this be said of any other man?

He works for happiness, and when he sees that happiness is no longer in the work, he ceases from it and passes on to a new work.

There might have been other reasons for the artist to labour, but these were found unsatisfactory.

He might have laboured because of duty, the soldier's reason; or from piety, the churchman's way. Or he might have been as the man in Wall Street and done it for money, or for fame —— the fool's wage —— or for adventure, or to be knighted, or to carry on a tradition; to make a little name so as to help the historian, or to make a great name and so baffle the historian; or from sheer folly, or for fun.

But the artist is neither so wise, nor so great,

nor so foolish as all that. He is only quite different. He works for happiness. Experiencing nothing but sorrow in his life, he is incessantly searching for happiness in his work —— and he finds it. Day after day it comes to him.

He is sorrowful that all the nobler virtues which are possessed by the lords and ladies and the other Democrats of the land cannot be his. When he realises that it is this higher nobility, this finer sense of honour, this purer purity, this Christ-like unselfishness which has raised them to what they are, has given them what they have, has taught them what and how to give, then must he become more sorrowful than all other men; and having nothing but his work, his art, he turns to that as to a friend, and lo! happiness is instantly his.

He cannot share his happiness with others, and therein he is selfish. He cannot share it, for it is nothing material: it is Freedom.

Do you not believe what I say? Do you think I am pretending? If so you must forgive me for having fooled you.

But it is true what I say: the artist is incomprehensible only because his thoughts and actions are natural. It is neither great nor petty to be incomprehensible. It is merely a vast sorrow, and without the true happiness for which the artist labours, that sorrow would be the master.

We will hope that there are only a few artists alive —— and at the same time we will not envy

them, for they are neither great nor small, having nothing we can filch quicker than they will offer it to us: they are only part and parcel of nature, and we know how common she is. The rich man and the beggar can both sit in the sun; priest and soldier are free to destroy the silence if they choose; the woman or the fool may play havoc with the blossoms on a rose tree or the wings of birds; and may not all men therefore praise or pick to pieces that which the artist creates? If he were part of civilization instead of part of nature itself, this privilege to pet or destroy his works could not be permitted by cautious legislators.

At the same time it is because he is part of nature that he never *imitates* nature. Why should he? Whatever he creates will be natural: he of all men has no need to copy.

See how the artist resembles all the other things in nature except man —— Man who has risen far above nature's gross and delicate ways. How perverse is the artist, how wilful! Why, he is never twice alike; he is inconsistency itself; he is as inconstant as the moon, and as much loved by lovers: as unruly and yet as calm as the sea —— the sea which you praise so highly. Why do you praise it? What is there you can guarantee about it?

Can you bind down the sea by a contract? Neither can you bind the artist by one. Has the sea any reason for creeping stealthily or bounding suddenly upon the shore? Neither has the

artist any reason for seeking happiness in play—— strange play perhaps, but play. Is the sun turning or is it standing still? Does anybody know? And tell me, does it turn for money or is it posing for fame? And moon and stars, what are they doing, and what sense is in their acts? Can any one tell? May it be from piety or love of adventure? It can't be that they are going on in that way just because they have to, because it is natural to do so! If so, then nature is ugliness itself, for can a servile obedience be beautiful? Can uselessness be of any value? And yet the moon and stars are beautiful.

How incomprehensible all this is; how natural! This is the only defence nature can put forward against all the accusations mankind has for ever brought against her, against all those ignorant and vain *enquiries* into a mystery so great, a problem so simple that there is no answer to it because none is needed.

And this is the only defence the artist shall bring: that he is part of nature, that he obeys the laws of nature, and stands or falls with nature; and that if mankind is an enemy to nature, if mankind has conquered nature through virtues which are greater than the virtues of the sun, the sea and the four winds, then mankind has also conquered the artist.

ALASSIO, 1911.

THE OPEN AIR

"We should return to the Greeks . . . play in the Open Air." MADAME ELEONORA DUSE.

WHAT does Madame Duse mean? Many there are who "return to the Greeks." What do they do?

They dress like Greeks, in London or the capitals of the Continent; they talk of Athens; they study Greek vases and buy imitation terra cottas from the dealers; they do all this and attain to the level of Canova and that false classicism which he and his times revelled in. Sandals are not classic, nor is the bare arm or leg a scrap more Greek than Ethiopian. So that if, as the great Italian actress says, we must "return to the Greeks", she means something different from what we have done up to the present.

She adds that we must "play in the open air."

Those Canovaites have always played by candlelight, by gaslight or by aid of that greater light, the arc lamp, and generally in a closed theatre. But the ordinary light of day seems inadequate for them; it is too natural, not "classic" enough.

Obviously we should not interpret Madame Duse's order in the way the followers of Canova interpret it. We must avoid sandals, Greek robes, Greek masks, Greek theatres, Greek dancing, Greek vases, and also, it almost goes without saying, that pseudo-Greek fire, the artificial light of the modern theatre.

Thus we are left with the daylight and the open air, and the use of it when we know how to make use of it; with Tragedy and Comedy, two old friends, the drama; with a covering for the body called costume, and a background known as scenery.

Well, but, we say, we already have drama, costume and scenery, and we can, if we will, turn on the light of day; it is cheap enough. But we cannot. To turn the light of day on to our modern scenery, costume, actors and dramas would be to cheapen them at the same time. Daylight is only for works of art; humbug works by artificial light.

Therefore what Madame Duse means is that we should drop the humbug, go into the open, and become Greeks *in so far as the Greeks made no use of trickery in their art*, and also by following the same *principles* which lie at the roots of the art of the theatre.

Thus we see that Madame Duse has said a very wise and truthful thing.

And now, I ask you, is all that possible until you know what the principles of the Greek theatre

were? I do not here speak of Greek dramatic literature, but of the Greek Theatre of Interpretation.

How did the Greeks interpret their dramas? How did they train their chorus, their actors? How many colours were allowed to be used in their scenery, how many in their costumes? Were the arms of their dancers always kept waving, or was there any rule about this? And what of the voices in Greece? What laws controlled the voice there? Might the voice take liberties as it does in speech or was it confined to certain notes as though it were an instrument of music?

All this must be satisfactorily answered by those who hold with Madame Duse that we must play in the open air once more. For if it is right to say we *must* do this, it is not easy to say *how* to do it.

The open air is at once the most lawful and the most illegal place in creation. All is allowed there except the unnatural. And what is that? That too will have to be settled before we can begin. For what is natural in the open air is held to be most unnatural in a drawing-room, and vice versa. And we who are listening to Madame Duse's order belong to drawing-rooms or libraries or some closed-in box of a place built by the brain of modern civilization.

And our audience is a regular tea-table fringe of humanity. Their "naturalness" is certainly not Greek although the Canovaites, by going in

much for afternoon teas and "high society", attempt to educate the poor things.

Thus we see that we are all of us unable to play in the open air because we cannot return to the Greek spirit nor achieve the Greek technique nor find a Greek reception. And yet we could do this and more, could out-Greek the most classic period of Greek art, could turn the very word "classic" into a little neighbour-word, to "Romantic", if we could only be content to begin at the beginning and develop strongly and steadily the love that is in human nature. But we should want a little collaboration. Love always demands that. The collaboration of our country, and a little less cheap criticism from our country, and especially from its women; for indeed while a nation delegates to its women-folk the task of lowering the standard of art, it can be sure that the standard will trail on the ground.

Yet it is a woman, you say, who proposes for us all the new standard in theatrical art?

Yes: and there her task ends —— to encourage us by pointing the way, by suggesting a new way, for the right way is everlastingly new even after two thousand years. To taunt us to *advance;* that indeed is woman's province; her right and our privilege: and only a few women are able to avail themselves of this right, the majority having bartered it away for the privilege of appearing silly, at the expense of all the wonderful things in art and nature.

And what then? What is the next step to realising this?

The next step is to——

Now who is reading this? It all depends upon that. I am ready to tell two kinds of people the answer: princes or millionaires; for the artists already know, and except for these three who else does it concern until it is accomplished?

ALASSIO, 1911.

BELIEF AND MAKE-BELIEVE

A Footnote to "The Actor and the Über-Marionette." [1]

"The worship of Bacchus was a grand intemperance movement for the Ancient World."

"A God presided over the Theatre."

"The theatre of Athens was not open night by night nor even day by day. Dramatic performances took place only at certain high festivals of Dionysus in winter and spring. These enthusiastic orgies of Bacchus were moral safety-valves which sought to compound for general sobriety and strictness of morals by a short period of unbridled licence."

HEAVEN forbid that we should ever attempt a reconstruction of the Greek Theatre: I would sooner accept, and throw in my weight with, the most vulgar theatre that the modern mind can conceive, for vulgarity is in every way preferable to archaism.

But the best thing which was back of the Greek Theatre —— *that* we should find back of all art at all times; and, if it is not to be found back of our art, we should know the reason why, for, till it be there, we labour in vain.

At the head of this article I have quoted passages from the works of two well-known writers

[1] See my "On the Art of the Theatre" (Heinemann).

on the Greek Drama,[1] mingling them together to form a single statement. Nothing new in the statement; we have been told that for a century.

Yet how does it strike you on re-reading it? It seems thrilling to me, thrilling and sane: thrilling to have a wild Festival, sane that such dramas as "Medea", the "Agamemnon", "Elektra", and the still greater lost dramas should be the fare for this so-called "wild" and "unlicensed" crowd. And to go mad in that way once a year seems more sane than to drivel and remain flat—democratic as we pronounce the word to-day—all the year round, which is practically what our cautious modern legislators encourage the public of two hemispheres to do. Moreover, that the artists and actors of the theatre of to-day should have to provide something harmless for such a public as ours to coquette with for three hundred and sixty-five days and nights, is, if you will give it a thought, as monstrous as it is difficult.

One hears so much nowadays about the superiority of the artists and actors of the Greek Theatre.

Now, if their work was superior to ours, one of the reasons is that they were not being *continually* asked to display it; another, that they were not always being asked to vary it; and a third that they were not asked to do all the "jollying."

Let us suppose that we have Thespis with us

[1] Richard G. Moulton, A.M., University of Cambridge; Ph.D., University of Pennsylvania. Jane Ellen Harrison, LL.D., Litt.D.

to-day —— Thespis and a Greek Chorus. He performs the "Bacchæ", let us say. We applaud at the end of each act, and at the end of the play the theatre literally rises at him. But the next day the critics begin to praise Thespis and to warn us.

We are not to be too quick, they say. They admit that it was wonderful, but they one and all refuse to be what they describe as "carried away" —— they swear they will not lose their heads.

Try and imagine Thespis and his companions reading these criticisms, and puzzling over the dread of the critic lest he be "carried away." What could Thespis or any Greek make of it?

Then imagine Thespis having to act another play on the next night, and four or five plays during the next fortnight (a thing he never did in Greece).

And what plays!

The manager of the theatre has insisted on variety, so Thespis puts on trousers and coat and performs "Man and Superman", "The Ideal Husband", and "The Passing of the Third Floor Back", "The Madras House", and "Justice."

What do you suppose is the state of his mind at the end of the season? I guarantee that he has either become a vulgar fool or is in an insane asylum; for, remember, before he opened the season he was a fine and vigorously sensitive Greek actor,

Let me try and explain why a fine and vigorously sensitive Greek actor would become vulgar or insane if subjected to modern theatrical conditions.

When Thespis was in Greece his whole life from childhood was given up to the expression of one great feeling——one belief——one thought; these three, feeling, belief and thought, all become *one,* and this "one" at one with the feeling, belief and thought of other artists, other priests, and other philosophers——and not opposed to that of the nation they ruled.

To devote one's life to the expression, or part expression, of disbelief——of lack of feeling——and of absence of thought——would have seemed as ludicrous as wrong in those days. To perform in plays which dealt sentimentally with divine things, or which dealt suggestively with vicious things, or which pampered domestic self-content, or "groused", or howled about domestic trivialities, would have been an impossibility. To perform plays at night, in a closed theatre with a band banging out musical selections from composers of all nationalities and centuries——to perform under the glare and heat of an artificial light, *might* have been bearable to Thespis and his companions (though it is more than doubtful); but he would certainly have flatly refused to be party to the conspiracy of lies which most modern dramatists have joined.

For to lie silently——that is the essence of

the lax "art" of the modern dramatist.[1] I do not say that it is entirely his fault; he has to make a living, and he finds that all goes so much more easily when he sets himself no limitations, such limitations, for example, as belief imposes:

"I believe in God the Father, Maker of Heaven and Earth," etc., in short, the Belief in the One Incomprehensible. No, he has to "make a living."

Thespis would have "struck" at representing Man as Atheist. He would have pointed out that his whole power lay in the fact that he believed in one thing and one thing only, and wished to express that one thing; that it was to that end he became an actor.

I fancy I hear him speaking:

"How can I express my belief in vitality by laughing at or whispering about everything as Mr. Shaw and M. Maeterlinck, your leading dramatists, would have me do? I *believe* vividly in all they laugh or tremble at, and I am easy about all they cry for. The world is for me all summed up on the day of the Festival. I am then ecstatic —— not even reasonable in your sense —— more what you would call 'impossible.'

[1] Here he reflects the times with a vengeance, holding the mirror down to Nature.

"The universal conspiracy of the silent-assertion lie is hard at work always and everywhere, and always in the interest of a stupidity or a sham, never in the interest of a thing fine or respectable." — *Mark Twain.*

"The significant eye which learns to lie with silence." — *Byron.* Also see Childe Harold, Canto iv, cxxxvi.

Even if you asked me to be reasonable in my art I should prefer to return to the plough and labour on the sides of Mount Pentelika; but if you ask me to be *unreasonable* with good Mr. Shaw and M. Maeterlinck, you go too far."

And I hear the world replying through the famous Impresario: "But, Mr. Thespis, I even offer you——"

"I don't care if you offer me a million a minute," cries Thespis. "I cannot do as you propose. Why, even *you* have and hold to your beliefs, and are a good chapel-goer."

"Yes, Mr. Thespis, I know," cooes the Impresario, "but I only ask you to 'pretend' you believe the different doubts of these different dramatists."

"Pretend!" cries Thespis. "Pretend! To Hades with your pretence! Don't you see that it is just because we Greeks never pretended that we made our noble theatre do honour to our nobler Land? It was just because we believed fiercely in what we performed that we did no harm to the receptive spectators, whereas you have forced all my poor brethren of the ancient order of sock and buskin to become *pretenders* instead of *actors,* and they are doing incessant harm by their pretending. Actors are to be held as other artists, and allowed liberty of belief, and expected to express that belief and no other. I would rather you swept away the whole race of actors and instituted dolls and made *them* slaves, than that

you should ask a single one of my fellows to *pretend* instead of to *be*. The Theatre of my land revealed the inner life and its values. Your Theatre parodies life —— and parodies it insipidly —— and, I may add, indifferently well.

"How you can all live without belief in the life you are given, and without some ecstacy in your work,[1] is to me as suggestive in its horror as in its pathos. Indeed, if you were to create a whole drama (not merely one play), which dealt entirely with this tragedy, 'The Triumph of Disbelief', and if all your writers would be willing to compose on this one sole theme, then I, on my part, too, would be willing to give my life to the terrible task of performing it —— medieval though its gloom would be —— because we should then all be of one mind, of *one* disbelief —— at least *united* in that."

"Mr. Thespis," says the Impresario with some show of displeasure, "I am not, I regret, able to look at the matter from any but a professional standpoint. I must remind you that my business is to make money, not to lend a hand towards developing my nation."

When Thespis had sufficiently recovered him-

[1] At the same time Thespis admitted that the performances of numberless comic actors and vaudevillists in Europe and America had given him a good deal of pleasure —— among those that he mentioned were Petrolini, Musco, Eva Tanguay, and some rope-dancers whose names he has forgotten. He found these very good to his taste, for they seemed one and all in love with life, and bent on making the best of it —— and showing it. They reminded him of the low comedians of Greece.

self to reply, he found that his companion had shrunk to such small proportions that it was only by going down on all fours that he could detect him somewhere in the centre of a little blob of green on the imitation Persian carpet.

But Thespis was not in the habit of going on all fours, and so he returned to Greece on two wings, and that learned critic, Professor Dash, announced in the *Weekly Paper-Basket* that "there is no fear that the admirable principles of Mr. Thespis will prevail."

"No fear" —— have you caught the phrase?

So let us leave Thespis to plough in Heaven while we come to Hecuba.

We are practically beliefless to-day —— and the whole tendency of Art reveals this to us —— yet there is not an artist but would rejoice to see the Renaissance of Belief, and turn his force to aid such a renaissance, be it what it might. But while every one is quarrelling over what Belief is, and whether it is a practical and possible thing to-day, the artists are marking time — and the earth groaning.

Belief and the power to worship —— that is what we lack.

When it was the worship of Dionysus, all went well. When it was another worship, all went well —— or better. When a third, still all went well —— or still better. But without *any* belief —— how can anything go well? Unless the spectator wakes up and attends (and tense atten-

tion is almost worship) what use for any effort by the artist?

And here we come to a point I touched on at the beginning of this note: that in the old days of the Great Grecian Theatre the actors were not asked to do all the "jollying", were not expected to wake up the audience, for the audience was wide awake long before the curtain was to rise.

The audience went to the theatre, *not for diversion; not to forget but tingling to remember.*

To remember what?

To remember *vitality,* and longing to hear a song about it; dying with impatience to see a play full of it; ready to go mad about it; not with a modern hectic madness or the madness of pain, but with the madness of delight.[1]

It was a vivid collaboration of State, People and Artists, not a cool collaboration governed by a timid committee of level-headed duffers.

All the collaborators were governed by Belief. Belief sat in the seats of the mighty and swarmed up the steps of the auditorium, and danced and sang upon the stage.

To-day ten thousand spectators relax and ask ten men to "pick them up." Preposterous and shameful situation!

Art is not a pick-me-up; it is a communion.

[1] Delight. Do you know the word — the feeling? All youth, all happiness — nothing sexual — stuffing — emotional — no smoke — all gay yellow-white fire. Children know it in the open air — we recall it by the sea or on high mountains — or in the earliest hours of day.

The theatre is not a bar; it is a famous temple.

It is not a gloomy place, nor a side-splitting place; it is an exciting, a tremendous place, where each man, whether on the stage or in the seats, lends himself to contribute to the excitement —— the excitement of Belief, not the excitement of Make-Believe: Reality, not Sham.

Off then with the bonds which tie you up, lest in the days to come you can no longer move, and the enemy find you panic-stricken.

IMAGINATION

PERHAPS you will not mind letting me write you a few words about the Theatre. I should like to write as a theatre man, in spite of the fact that an able writer a little while ago wrote that the future will not regard me as an artist of the theatre, clearing the way now, and to be passed later and forgotten, "but as a supreme artist with a vision of a great new art which links itself likewise to the Eternal."

Now, although I should love to be connected with anything so promising as the Eternal, I want most of all to be linked with that which promises nothing——that is to say, with the Theatre.

In one or two short books that I have written I have always brought the word "Theatre" into the title. It is, in my mind, too early to talk of the Drama, and we must be content at present to confine ourselves to the Theatre. If, as too many suppose, the Art of the Theatre came out of the Art of the Drama, we should have had a fine theatre centuries ago; but I hold that the theatre always has to appear before the drama, and that Drama is a natural consequence of a fine theatre. I believe this is the truth, and it ought

not to be spoiled. Centuries have attempted to prove something else, and centuries have failed. Let us then for the first time in history accept the obvious——and accept it without further delay. If it is not so obvious to you as it is to me, will you excuse me from going over much old ground, and turn to the book called "On the Art of the Theatre",[1] which was written by me as a footnote to explain the obvious?

I for one have no great love for what is called the *New* Art. I don't believe in the *New* Art just because I do believe in the *Old* Arts. I believe that what we are taught is true——that is to say that all things incessantly develop until they gradually change their appearance. The externals of all things therefore often become entirely new; the internal, and that is the eternal, remains the same; well, then, how can we have new art?

In the old days it was held that spirit and matter are separate things. To-day it is held that spirit and matter are one and the same thing. In like manner Drama and Theatre are held to be one and the same thing. I try to keep the two apart, and for this reason I can only give an answer to a question concerning the Art of the Theatre and Drama to those who are willing to keep circling round these two, viewing the opposed sides: they will then be continually contradicting themselves, and by that process will approach

[1] "On the Art of the Theatre" (Heinemann. London).

the truth. For to look at a thing from one point of view and try to be truthful and logical is to tell but one half of the truth, to speak only in favour of matter or only in favour of spirit. And in this question of spirit and matter and of Drama and Theatre, I must be rather on the side of that which is eternal than on the side of that which dies, but I will not deny the primary value of matter. Perhaps you will now say that it is change which is eternal: perhaps so.

Now then, we come to the *direction* in which things move to change, and here each thing, each man, is free and his desire is his law. His desire is that which gives direction to eternal change, and *should the whole world desire to move in the direction desired so fiercely by the old prophets and masters, we should regain once more that excitement which was once called ecstacy.*

All this is nothing new, it is very old; it has that to commend it. It is extraordinary that so aged a thing should be at the same time so youthful. I think there are many thousands who feel about this as I do, but these thousands as a rule are for some reason not chosen to be either artists or critics; nowadays, it seems that it is the man of *brains* who is chosen to be artist or critic, and of course brains are nice, useful things, and the world couldn't move on without them, but they are not the things which make it move. That which makes it move is something which is outside it, and yet that extraordinary thing is found

everywhere, in almost helpless atoms, even in mud-banks. It is that which the scientist is telling us *we* can create, and of course to argue with a scientist would be impertinent and foolish; he knows so much, but he has bad eyes, he cannot see. Like the man dreaded by Blake, he sees *with,* not *through,* his eyes.[1]

What then is this mysterious thing which is eternal, which creates itself, which keeps the world spinning, which never grows old or gets tired? No one has seen its face and lived. But there are some who have seen the reflection of its face. We call the reflection of this thing *Imagination*, and I think it is quite the most precious possession of mankind. Far more rapid than the inventions of modern science, far more powerful than anything in the world, it can pierce all that is material, no matter how dense; it leaps all divisions, no matter how wide. While it is the one thing needful to-day, it is the one thing disregarded; it is a thing all men possess in abundance and few men will develop. This has always been so. How many hundred years ago was it written: "Go unto this people and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: For the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; *lest* they should see with their eyes, and hear with

[1] "Man is led to believe a lie, when he sees with, not through the eye." — *William Blake.*

their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." [1]

It is all so obvious, it is so extraordinarily clear. This which heals, by which you see, by which you hear, by which you understand and are converted to the truth of life, and by which you live, is Imagination; you die the day you cease to have it, you live the hour that it comes to you. And then, too, it is so like another thing: it "is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, is not easily provoked, suffereth long and is kind." [2] What does it matter what we call it? It is one and the same thing. And though one speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have it not, one is become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. You see we are told this authoritatively, so we have to believe it. And if you work with materials (any materials, even with a carpenter's materials) it is extraordinary how true such a thing becomes to you.

Now the carpenter plays an important part in the theatre; in fact, the stage carpenter is a man upon whom everybody relies. What would you say were I to prove to you some day that the stage carpenter could be a great artist? I don't say that I want to prove that *and that alone*, but it is quite as likely and quite as easily proved as that the man who writes with a pen is a great artist.

[1] Acts XXVIII, 26, 27.

[2] It is so like, that it may be said to be its very reflection —— Love and Imagination. What are these two but the face of God and its reflection in the mirror?

And I should say this humbler service can become just as spiritual and eternal as that of the man who wrote the poem which commences "To-morrow and tomorrow and tomorrow." What a revelation if this should some day be proved and we should *understand!*

Then there is the man known as the theatrical electrician. Now suppose when I get my School I take away his electricity from him, and I give him gas-lamps to work with, oil-lamps, candles, and then finally limit him to the sun. What chance do you think he will have? Will he not have his first great chance? And yet he is only an artisan, a man who works with his hands. He is supposed to be concerned merely with externals, the externals of the " theatrical profession ", and to have no part in the Drama. But who is this arrogant being who dares to assert that there is only one man who creates the drama, who can create it, and who ever has created it, and that one man the writer —— the man of brains?

Should these mere artisans advance boldly some day and awaken our understanding, our imagination, it will not be through the extent and quality of their brain power or their taste, but because of their living perception and knowledge of humble materials. It will not be because they are thinking of the eternal, or absorbed in the contemplation of beauty; but it will come about when they have learnt to see that their home, the theatre, the most despised institution all the world

over, is endowed with just exactly as much of what we have always called "God" as once blazed forth on the Mount of Calvary, blossomed by the sides of the Nile, or strode along the lonely paths of Siddârtha.

LONDON, 1912.

PART II

THEATRICAL REFORM

THERE is too much haste about all this reform, far too much haste. Nearly every one concerned in it seems to be frightened of time, and in this haste the good energy is wasted.

Each day, week and month we read energetic statements made or hasty conclusions formed by enthusiasts.

Those enthusiasts should pull up and discipline themselves a little. Instead of leaping quickly to conclusions they should begin at the beginning and search for the truth. This would bring them to the end of their lives in a more contented frame of mind than they promise to reach it in at present.

The enthusiasts are the only people who count, but the sum reaches a very low figure when they let their enthusiasm carry them away.

For example, an enthusiast for the theatre has only to see one performance given in the open air with a background of trees, let us say by some "Forest Players", to believe that the solution of the riddle of the theatre lies in taking the theatre into the open air.

Another enthusiast believes that the whole

thing is to be solved when the dance is thoroughly understood.

The third believes that it is all a matter of the scenery.

A fourth is sure that it is a question of artificial lighting.

A fifth thinks that it has something to do with socialism, and that if plays dealing with the labour movement are put before the audience the whole theatre will revive.

The sixth enthusiast thinks the reproduction of actual life on the stage is the secret.

The seventh is convinced that it is something to do with the community, and that a communal theatre would solve the riddle.

An eighth thinks instead that the reproduction of the ancient drama, Greek or Elizabethan, in theatres most like to those in which they originated, would solve the riddle.

The ninth enthusiast (for the impresarios are enthusiasts in their own way) thinks that the whole thing is a question of dollars.

And so, as I have said, day after day these voices are heard making these announcements with all the finality of the inexpert.

Alas, these gentlemen in their haste are of assistance to but one set of people only; to those who wish to make money out of the theatre.

For the clever business man can take any one reform and successfully tackle it and turn it into a good paying concern, because when the show

takes place the reform will not be noticed, but only a certain sense of novelty will be felt. That is just what he wants.

The open-air enthusiasts are merely playing into the hands of the impresario who comes along with say a "Joan of Arc" produced with a quantity of French or German help and makes fifty per cent. for himself and fifty per cent. to the score of vulgarity. A certain club in California is doing exactly the same. And those enthusiasts, because they get near to Nature, think that they are getting near to the soul of the folk, and expect some miraculous folk-drama to result from the coquetting of the theatre and its painted face and gaudy trappings, with the brambles and the redwood trees.

In the same way some enthusiasts in Russia, in Germany, in Denmark, in Switzerland, in France and in England, who are studying the theory of Delsarte and making their limbs nice and supple, and producing dances as sweet as the chocolates in the celebrated box, are but playing into the hands of the impresario. They are certainly doing nothing to aid in the rebirth of the theatre.

Signor Fortunio, Herr Littmaubachstein with their elaborate lighting effects, the young Munich and London artists with their scenic effects, the Futurists of yesterday afternoon, are all serving the cause of the business man.

The Socialist theatre reformer with his ponderous labour plays has for some time been an-

nexed by business men, and we have their word for it that it is paying.

The reformer with realistic tendencies who reproduces an actual room, actual manners and other actual sights and sounds will of course be a very useful if rather expensive man to rake in the pounds, shillings, and pence for Monsieur Impresario.

As I have said before, each of these reformers, taken separately, can be of value to the business man. Taken together only can they crush him. They can only crush him when they combine, and on the day that they do so I would not give two pins for the cleverest business man on the face of the earth. On that day the theatre will commence to pull itself together.

Certainly the question of the open air must come to be considered, but it must not be considered enthusiastically, but coolly and from many different points of view before anything can be done.

The thing in itself, the idea in itself, creates enthusiasm in whoever thinks about it, but we must not rush into the open air and begin to wave our arms and quote Shakespeare and think we have achieved something by doing so.

This is abominable and utterly unworthy of the good fellows who carry on in that way. As I have said, it shows haste. They are frightened of time. They feel they are going to be left behind. If they did not feel this they would

take many more years to consider the question, "How to act in the open air, and what is the difference between such acting and that destined for a roofed theatre?" And this question leads up to so many other questions[1] that very few persons are able to answer them to-day, and certainly not in a hurry.

So it is with the dance. What is its actual relationship to the theatre, and, considering our first question, its relation to the theatre of the open air in distinction to the roofed-in theatre? No one can hastily don a few Egyptian clothes and, relying upon personality, come before the world and claim to have discovered a new theatre in a *pas seul*. Dance may or may not have its place in the Art of the Theatre; to judge from the elect who choose to copy Isadora Duncan's *manner* instead of acknowledging her "magic" and refraining once and for ever, most probably it has not; but this cannot be decided in a hurry.

With painted scenery and with the lighting of this modern scene the same judgment has to be passed. You may not claim to have discovered the new Art of the Theatre on the score that you have designed and lighted some original scenes.

Again, because you have dealt with the new Socialistic questions of the day in some plays you must not believe that you have created a new drama.

Reform may or may not come through reform-

[1] See essay, "Belief and Make-Believe," page 48.

ing Theatre construction, Dance, Scene, Lighting, Motif of plays, the Box-office and Acting; but such reform can only be at all valuable after the reformers become united in friendship, and are in closer communion, and their followers — *following* — instead of barking in the wings.

I hope that before long these enthusiasts who are at present divided will unite, and prove again in the history of the theatre the power of real and disinterested enthusiasm, coupled with sound judgment — and that they will recognise that service is the nearest thing to magic.

FLORENCE, 1910.

PUBLIC OPINION

THERE has been of late years a revival of Arts and Crafts in Europe and America. We have all heard about the revival——but where are the Arts and where the Crafts?

Higgledy-piggledy——anywhere——ingloriously mixed and twisted into a cursed confusion, a hindrance and a reproach to those who joined together to revive the Arts and the Crafts and so to revive the earth, and so to revive Man.

Why has this been so?

How is it that man is not a scrap revived by this "Revival?"

In a frontispiece to a book I find the answer.

It is a head of Krishna.

"*Have you left us, O Krishna, because we took you for a common play-fellow and did not pay you the tribute of worship that you deserved at our hands?*

"*How often, when playing, we quarrelled and abused you.*

"*Did you take these things to heart, and desert us, though we were so deeply devoted to you?*

"*We often beat you, or carried you on our shoulders, and rode on yours. Often we ate first,*

and gave you the remnants, calling you by all familiar names.

"Have you, for all these, forsaken us, O Beloved Krishna?"

This is the chorus of the shepherd boys in an old drama of India.

Krishna is the God-Man: a shepherd boy, he is also the earth and the sky. He is the Ideal.

Thus we are answered by this beautiful head of the Ideal. It says nothing, but the boys have spoken for him —— it has called forth their secret thoughts and fears.

It is not wise to quarrel with the Ideal —— with God; nor to take the Godhead for a common playfellow, nor to grab at food before we have first offered sustenance to the Godhead; nor to lower it by the familiarity of "Hullo, old chap!"

This is wickedness, for it is folly incarnate.

We in Europe and in America have taken our Krishna out in motor-cars for joy rides —— while attempting the "Revival" of the Arts and the Crafts.

Can craziness go further? —— or dream a lower dream?

We put on our Arts and wear out our Crafts.

Then we put them off, and go out and air our perfect disbelief in everything ideal; our utter distrust of the God Krishna, or whatever other name we thrust upon the only God.

And because we, the leaders, do this, we, the artists, as a race —— and because our "great

artists" as a rule and our "great personalities", and our other leaders, are forgetful of God and of obedience to his laws——and because we in our weakness have been hail-fellow-well-met with the mob——so the mob, growing fatter and sillier year by year, has bred an impertinence so gross and despicable that it dares to give an opinion which is called "public opinion."

A fig for such public opinion that causes States and religions to totter and to fall as they are falling now!

Hail once more to that old arrogance so grandly depicted on Krishna's face, so gloriously reflected on the faces of all great men, and so furiously hated by the mob——the mob of the loggias at the Covent Garden Opera, the mob of the National Assemblies, the mob of the drawing-rooms and of Trafalgar Square!

Hail once more to that divine arrogance which knew that the obedience of the many to the judgments of the one meant happiness to the mass of men! Hail to the strong divine men adored by the lowly, and only detested by that mixed mass of "Lords" and "Ladies", "Artists" and "Others" known as the "Mob" and "Public Opinion!"

The whole of India's Arts and Crafts testify to the sanity and the beauty that exhales from the soul of the strong and arrogant ruler.

In the Arts of India and in the Crafts of India every little statue of bronze, every little box of

wood, every little shawl of wool and every little stone jar proves the happiness of the old Indian races; proves that their love of loveliness and sanity sprang from their love of obedience to their arrogant rulers, and the love of those rulers for the arrogant and sole rule of Krishna —— the Ideal.

You understand me to say —— I like to think this was so.

All arguments and queries are in vain. There is no doubt. Arguments and queries are the weak inventions of weak and selfish fools.

London, Berlin, Paris, Vienna and New York are infested by this rabble of weak and selfish fools who argue and question from morn till night as to what is wrong with the world.

Nothing is wrong with it. Everything is wrong with them, until like dogs they come to heel.

Coming to heel they become something — they have perceived the first essentials; baying at the moon they compete only with the midnight prowlers on the tiles —— and are nothing but a Noise.

Still as I write goes up the howl:

"What is wrong with the world?
"What is wrong with the world?
"What is wrong with the world?"

YOU are —— you who put the question: nothing else is wrong with it.

Obey the Ideal, have better manners —— take

your hands out of your pockets——try to talk your own language correctly——try to walk down the street like a man rather than lurch down it like a monkey——and then you will have taken the first and baby step towards understanding that you may not be one of those whose opinion, just because it is a common one, is worth being made and called "public."

And when you have trained yourself in manners and have learned to *wonder* even a little at the earth and sky, then Krishna and his arrogant face will be seen by you; on that day remember how less than nothing you are and how inscrutable, indomitable and unforgiving he is.

On the day you realise this, the Arts and Crafts will revive; States and religions will arise all fresh once more, and Mankind will again be happy. To be happy we must respect that which is incomprehensible to each of us——and obey him to whom even the least of things—even we—are comprehensible.

The Divine Mother of the Universe has many arms, but with her two tenderest and strongest she shields her Divine Son into whose heart she poured the Fire of her Essence.

Let us obey him.

FLORENCE, 1914.

PROPOSALS OLD AND NEW

A Dialogue between a Theatrical Manager and an Artist of the Theatre.

FOREWORD

In this dialogue, although the Manager says but little, he condescends to say more than most managers. He echoes those two celebrated if slightly worn phrases that "Art does not pay", and that "We give the Public what it demands." He does this, we may be sure, more from habit than from any belief in their worth.

I have purposely kept the Manager from attempting to prove that what he offers the public is either original or beautiful, for I felt that my readers were tired of hearing the old lie over again. So I have kept him as quiet as possible, unwilling that he should destroy any remaining chance of retaining esteem for his methods, or sympathy for his appalling cause. I hope in this way not to have done him any injustice.

MANAGER. That is the finest scene I ever saw. But you can't realise yon drawing upon the stage.

ARTIST. You are right: I cannot.

MANAGER. Then, if you cannot reproduce it, why do you show it to me?

ARTIST. To make an impression on you. Why ask me absurd questions?

MANAGER. Because I wish to be practical; I wish to protect my interests.

ARTIST. But you are not protecting them; you are utterly at my mercy and seem to be trying to ruin them.

MANAGER. Really you look at things in a strange way. Now come down to earth and tell me how we can realise yon design upon the stage.

ARTIST. We cannot; I have told you so repeatedly, but you were so quick with your questions you would not let me tell you something which saves the situation. That design, as I have just said, is made to give you a certain impression. When I make the same scene on the stage it is sure to be quite different in form and colour, but it will create the same impression on you as this design in front of you now.

MANAGER. Two things quite different will create the same impression? Are you joking?

ARTIST. No, I am not joking, but I will do so if you insist upon it.

MANAGER. No, tell me more; explain what you mean.

ARTIST. Well, a design for a scene on paper is one thing; a scene on the stage is another. The two have no connection with each other. Each depends on a hundred different ways and means of creating the same impression. Try to adapt the one to the other, and you get at best only a

good translation. You do not understand? I know it; but what would you have? You ought to be content *not* to understand —— *never* to understand; if you could comprehend you would have no need to consult me.

MANAGER. Well, it all sounds very risky.

ARTIST. It is; terribly risky —— for you. That is my point; that is the artist's everlasting point. He thinks; you risk. If you begin thinking everything is lost. Leave that to your stage manager —— to me. You shall have no other risk but me. Risk me, and you stand the chance of gaining all. Avoid that risk, and you run no chance of winning anything.

MANAGER. You terrify me. I think you must be mad.

ARTIST. And you have only one thing to be careful about; you must take care to study the difference between the different types of men the world calls "artists." Sort them out, avoid the commercial fellows and search for the "mad" artist (I think you said mad). If you can find *one* I promise you you've found a fortune. Then risk him; play him first on the Red and then on the Black; throw him where you will, he's sure to bring you luck. But, my dear sir, whatever you do pray gamble like a gentleman; risk enormously, hazard all on this *surety;* risk with decency I beg; do not incessantly alter your mind —— and for heaven's sake don't apologize for your method of play!

MANAGER. Upon my word, you are an original being!

ARTIST. I am. I thought that was why you came to me. All artists are "original" to business men and all business men are "original" to artists; both can truthfully be called eccentrics. This is as it should be. The securest foundation for a successful union. The mistake is for either of them to try and understand how the other works. Each should remain ignorant of the other's methods, and they should unite to a common madness called the "concentric." This would be very productive, very economic. Sometimes we get a man who is both artist and business man; Cecil Rhodes was such a man. He used the soil of a continent as a sculptor uses a handful of clay, and from it he fashioned United South Africa —— and we shall probably learn in time that he made something even vaster than that. Learn to risk, my friend; and learn also that ideas are rare things, and that most artists are packed full of ideas. Therefore the artist is the finest of all commodities in the market.

MANAGER. But what if an idea does n't pay?

ARTIST. An idea which does n't pay has not yet been discovered. If you don't know *how* to make it pay that is not a matter I can interfere in, for if I interfere I overstep your frontiers. If you cannot make it pay that but reveals your ignorance of how to handle it, and you fail at your own game —— but, observe, the idea has

not failed. It waits for some one better fitted to develop it.

MANAGER. So you put the whole blame of failure on the manager or business man, not on the artist?

ARTIST. Yes, on the handling, and more especially so in the case of a very original idea. With ordinary ideas it is somewhat different. Ordinary ideas are generally rather weak, and then the only blame which can be attached to the business man is that he wasted too much time and money on working a poor field. Then the whole blame lies with the artist. The rare fields are the valuable ones, and in the realms of art the rarest field is that where the most original idea is buried. Let a shrewd business man stake all he has on that field; with patience and determination it will yield him all he desires.

MANAGER. Yes —— but to return to practical matters.

ARTIST. I had never departed from them.

MANAGER. I am speaking of this design for a scene which strikes me as quite wonderful. How are we to realize that on the stage?

ARTIST. To answer your question I must first ask you another. If we were standing on the edge of a very rich gold field and long veins of pure gold were proved to be lying buried under your very nose, and I were to ask you how to "realize" that gold, would you not answer me that the ore was not of practical commercial value

until extracted, washed, removed to the mint and coined? In fact, changed entirely from its present entrancing condition and transformed into another, yet equally valuable, condition and form? Well, I answer you in the same way about this scene. And what is more, I advise you to work the mine from which that design came, and it will yield you all that you desire. But don't attempt the task with one pick and a shovel. Put money into it——all your money——don't be frightened. I happen to be a man with imagination, and in art that is the equivalent of a gold mine; it only needs to be properly worked. You will say I have no false modesty about myself. Certainly not, Sir, the best artists since time immemorial have always known how to value their powers. Fools call it conceit, but wise men know differently.

MANAGER. Why have not business men done as you suggest before now?

ARTIST. They have. They did so in the fifteenth century; the Renaissance could not have happened without them. They did so in Athens; they did so in Egypt; they will do so in England and America. In fact they have always done so except when a wave of timidity has swept over the earth and created a panic. We are just about to emerge from such a wave; it is the psychological moment.

MANAGER. And now you expect to see every one spending money upon works of art?

ARTIST. Certainly I expect to see shrewd business men investing their money in ideas; and as ideas are the property of men of imagination I expect to see these two types of man, artist and business man, combine and place good things before the public instead of worthless things. In many instances good things are already before the public; but in the branch of public service in which we are engaged you must agree with me (knowing what you know), that the public is cheated.

MANAGER. But art does n't pay in this branch of the service.

ARTIST. Again you make the ancient excuse. Art pays no worse, no better than anything else *if you know how to make it pay;* and I have just hinted to you how to make it pay, so I fail to see what other excuse you can make for not serving the public honestly and letting the band strike up at once.

MANAGER. Do you insinuate that I cheat the public?

ARTIST. No —— I say it openly.

MANAGER. I give them what they demand.

ARTIST. Another excuse —— the same one that I 've heard for years. Why can't you invent some more reliable answers than "*It does n't pay*", and "*I give the public what it demands?*" You probably think that what you are saying is true, but still that does not alter the fact that you are saying what is false.

It is false in many ways. You should know quite well that the Public is so vast, is composed of so many different classes and types, its tastes varying with each type, that it is sheer lunacy to assert that there is no public for works of art. It is as much as to say that the public is incapable of appreciation. If this were so, you would have to explain how it is that the public knows the difference between a good loaf of bread and a bad one? or explain how it is that the public can discern a good day from a rainy day——how it knows a good song and a good horse from a bad song and horse? Realise that the public knows everything which is good from everything which is bad; in fact the public is as right as rain; let us hear no more criticisms of it. If you choose to criticise *a small section of the public*, that is another matter, especially if you choose that small section which grumbles at the nation's best soldiers, sailors, statesmen, judges, doctors, priests and artists. Yet, far from criticising this section, *it is the very section you deliberately cater for in the theatre,* for those who form it are always tired after their day's grumbling and need amusement of the dullest kind. And you call that handful of the nation "the Public!"

MANAGER. You do not convince me. I am certain that if the public wanted works of art it would create a demand for them.

ARTIST. My dear Sir, you encourage me. You say the very thing I wanted to say. "To

create a demand." You realise that a public demand is CREATED and does not create itself. You realise that the nation entrusts certain of its officers with the different tasks of creating this, that and the other, and amongst these things is the "creating a demand." The public cannot speak for itself; if the whole lot speak at once no one is heard; if one man speaks he is not listened to unless he is elected as spokesman by the whole nation. Now who has the nation elected to speak for it about this matter of art? No one. Therefore until it does elect some representative, how shall we know its wishes?

MANAGER. But two hundred thousand men and women visited the Grand Theatre to see "Julius Cæsar," and thereby——

ARTIST. Two hundred thousand people are not the Public, and the directors of the public taste in theatrical matters are self-elected. A fine state of affairs indeed!

MANAGER. What would you propose doing to discern the tastes of the nation?

ARTIST. I should propose that you should try to go to the people. Send companies round England and America for the purpose of collecting votes for and against certain types of play and certain ways of producing plays. Let these companies play three plays by Shakespeare—— "Hamlet", the "Merchant of Venice", and "Henry V"; a play by Sheridan and one by Ibsen; a play by Goldsmith and one by Goldoni;

a play by Molière and a modern French problem play; a play by Shaw, one by Strindberg, one by Synge and one by Yeats, and one Pantomime or Dumb-show drama. Let these plays be produced very carefully by the different stage managers keen for the competition. Let this company call at every centre in America, and afterwards at several of the smaller towns, and let the people record their votes for and against the different pieces. Of course the question at issue will have to be laid clearly before them, and their serious consideration of the pieces requested.

The journals all over England and America would take the matter up and would help to make this question clear. The best journals would point out to their readers that the question was one of those affecting the national welfare, and a difficult one to answer, and would help the people to see the difference between a healthy and an unhealthy drama; between a romantic or poetic treatment and a drab and realistic treatment. The excitement created by this tour of the States would in all probability create a new and serious interest in the theatre, and the whole country would at last be glad to take up the matter of State theatres.

Such a plan as I have sketched out roughly for you is capable of development, and is just the kind of thing that would encourage the theatre. It would cost money, but it would bring in money, and the direct advantages to be derived from such a step are as obvious as they are enormous. Here

then is an opportunity for a business man of ability to make his mark. After this test you will probably be surprised to find that the public has all along been opposed to the rubbish which it is forced to accept at the theatre in place of good stuff.

MANAGER. And what do you think the public wishes?

ARTIST. All that is good. It wants good statesmen and good fighters in an emergency, and it gets them. It wants good amusements and good art. The first it sometimes gets; the second is withheld from it. The cinemas, the vaudevilles and the circuses provide admirable amusement. The Theatre should provide for its art. Popular art? Certainly popular art. When certain sections of the public wish for relaxation they find it in the music hall. Excellent! But when another section of the public wants something better than leather, it looks for it and can't find it, and is disappointed. Think how invigorating Shakespeare could be made to that enormous section of the public who work with their brains all day! Think of the doctors, priests, writers, painters, musicians, architects, city men, engineers, army and navy men, politicians, secretaries, editors, journalists and other social men and women to whom a vigorous living theatre might prove *refreshing*, and who are to-day obliged to avoid the place because it is wearisome —— a bore.

It is utterly impossible to believe that the failure of the theatre to-day is due to a low standard of public taste. Public taste was never better than it is going to be to-morrow. Test the statement by the method I have suggested and you will be doing a great thing for the nation. But get up early, if you want to be in time.

THE APENNINES, 1910.

PART III

GENTLEMEN, THE MARIONETTE!

HE has been waiting so long in the servants' hall that I am sure you will not find fault with me for having called him upstairs and brought you together.

Yes, he has a capacity for waiting —— a talent not without charm in so humble a creature.

Humility is only an assumption in men.

Let me begin by saying a word on the nature of the Marionette.

He will wait anywhere for any length of time —— hidden in a box —— in a cellar —— or even in a century. But he will wait —— and when he is brought forward and is made to feel at home he will still wait; then he waits upon you and all of us like a true servant.

There is only one actor —— nay, one man —— who has the soul of the dramatic poet and who has ever served as true and loyal interpreter of the poet. This is the Marionette. So let me introduce him to you.

Some of you will think you have met him before. But how is that possible? For once to meet him is never to forget him —— whereas you and he are strangers.

Yet I am not entirely just. There are times

when you have come across him unawares. He has many disguises, and he impersonates known heroes and despised persons equally well.

You have come across him in some deserted cathedral in Italy or even in England —— for cathedrals are free and " open to the public ", and are therefore deserted. There you will have seen him hanging upon the Cross. And many Christians love him; he is interpreting the Drama of the Poets —— Man and God.

Or you have caught a glimpse of him in some temple in the Far East, enacting a more serene drama —— seated before incense —— hands folded —— very calm.

Or in the arms of a child you have seen him, interpreting the little hearts and the larger dreams of love!

These attempts of his to reach you have not entirely failed; but still for all this until now you have actually and unconsciously kept him waiting in the servants' hall.

Gentlemen —— the Marionette!

Yet silently he waits until his master signals him to act, and then in a flash, and in one inimitable gesture, he readjusts the injustice of justice, the illegality of the law, the tragic farce of " Religions ", the broken pieces of philosophies and the trembling ignorance of politics.

And what other virtues can I name besides these two of silence and obedience? I think these are enough.

For his chief virtue springs out of these. Because of them he has been able to avoid that appalling crime of exhausting the stock. Born of wood, of ivory, of metal or what you will, he is content to obey his nature — their nature. He does not *pretend* to be flesh and blood. Others can be as great as he —— true, he always leaves much to be desired; a great being therefore —— greater than Wagner and the other celebrated men who leave nothing we long to have any longer.

After Richard Wagner, after Michael Angelo, after Shakespeare —— what? Blanks! They exhausted their gift, they squandered their talent; nothing was left. They did everything, suggested nothing; and their sons inherited empty purses, empty veins; instead of thinking of their responsibilities these great exhausters thought only of themselves. They were all full-stops to short sentences.

This is not the ideal of the artist, nor the ideal of mankind.

The ideal is more companionable, more paternal, gentler. It ends nothing; it will not go alone; it takes its sons with it; and it has something more priceless than all else to hand out to them at the end of the journey.

Leonardo was such an ideal. The Marionette is another.

The Marionette, through his two virtues of obedience and silence, leaves to his sons a vast

inheritance. He leaves to them the promise of a new art.

The Marionette is a little figure, but he has given birth to great ones who, if they preserve the two essentials, obedience and silence, shall preserve their race. The day that they hunger for further power they shall surely fall.

These children of his I have called Über-Marionettes, and have written of them at some length.

What the wires of the Über-Marionette shall be, what shall guide him, who can say? I do not believe in the mechanical, nor in the material. The wires which stretch from Divinity to the soul of the poet are wires which might command him. Has God no more such threads to spare —— for one more figure? I cannot doubt it.

I will never believe anything else.

And did you think when I wrote five years ago of this new figure who should stand as the symbol of man —— and when I christened him the Über-Marionette —— to see real metal or silken threads.

I hope that another five years will be long enough time for you to draw those tangible tangle-able wires out of your thoughts.

PARIS, 1912.

ON MARIONETTES

To the pupils in my Dramatic College I put the following question yesterday: "Do you consider the Marionette natural?" "No," they answered with one voice.

"What!" I replied indignantly. "Not natural? All its movements speak with the perfect voice of its nature. If a machine should try to move in imitation of human beings, that would be unnatural. Now follow me: the Marionette is more than *natural;* it has Style —— that is to say, *Unity of Expression:* therefore the Marionette Theatre is the true theatre."

ALEXANDER HEVESI, BUDAPEST.

A NOTE ON MASKS

ALMOST all the things which were held as essential in the Theatre of the ancients have so degenerated to the ludicrous that it is impossible to speak of them without evoking laughter——laughter in the common people, and a particular kind of bored drawl in many of the cultured. It seems to me that I shall never forget trying to explain to a certain Doctor T—— that a piece of work which a friend of mine had just invented for the theatre was to be given without the use of words. He would not allow (I remember his gravity) that a serious subject should be treated on the stage without words. And when I explained in what way my friend had resolved to do this, how strange was the tone in which Doctor T—— shot out the one word, "Ah, Pantomime!"

Dancing, Pantomime, Marionettes, Masks; these things so vital to the ancients, all essential parts of their respected Art of the Theatre at one time or another, have now been turned into a jest.

Dancing——a straight toe like an icicle, strapped in like a "Bambino" in an over-pink tight; something on the top of it like a powder

puff, and the whole thing set whirling at an enormous rate like a teetotum: it is the modern public dancer —— or when it be not this, it is in every case, and I make no exception, merely a parody of the magic of Isadora Duncan.

Or two persons like bears hugging one another, and slowly and heavily as bears growling their way round a room, plod, plod, plod, bump, plod, bump: this is the modern private dancer. And it is permitted.

These things being permitted and being so obviously ridiculous (even for a ridiculous age), and being labelled as the dance, it stands to reason that when the word "Dance" is mentioned seriously, one of these two ridiculous pictures is conjured up by the listener. Indeed, people are even prevailed upon to smile on reading in the Bible that King David danced among the women before the Ark. They picture to themselves a fancy King David attired either as a powder puff or as a bear, whirling, lumbering or fooling round on a dusty road——probably up-hill. Why, the thing is inconceivable! It is of no use for Royal Academicians to draw pictures of the famous Artist-King as sedately advancing with a harp in his hands like a courtier of the time of Louis XIV. Here again the thing is become inconceivable because sad and ridiculous; and as the imagination of man, owing to industrialism, is not very brilliant, it stands to reason that people give up the idea of serious and beautiful dancing as having

really existed in daily life, and fall back into the modern distortion.

The case is even worse with Pantomime. At best the world conceives of pantomime to be what the French actors are so good at, and at the worst they think it is Clown and Pantaloon. French actors are charming and delightful; Clown and Pantaloon are entrancing; but these are undoubtedly not the best exponents of the Art of Pantomime.

So if you point to the case of Buddha teaching symbolic gesture or "Pantomime" to his pupils, the world will instantly think of Harlequinade or of "L'Enfant Prodigue", and dressing Buddha (in their mind's eye) in coloured, diamond-patterned tights or the loose white costume of Pierrot, will giggle as they try to be serious about it all.

The Marionette, too; mention him in good society, even in learned society, and there will be an awkward moment or two. It seems that he has become one of those things that one must not mention: like the novels of Dumas, he is only for boys and girls: and if you remind any one that he figured in the Feast of Bacchus when the Egyptians celebrated those rites, people will instantly think of a poor doll tied to a stick and resembling nothing so much as Aunt Sally. If you remind people of what M. Anatole France writes of those strange and wonderful beings, the Marionettes, they will probably put M. Anatole France down

as an eccentric gentleman. Still, let us hear what he says:[1]

"J'ai vu deux fois les marionnettes de la rue Vivienne, et j'y ai pris un grand plaisir. Je leur sais un gré infini de remplacer les acteurs vivants. S'il faut dire toute ma pensée, les acteurs me gâtent la comédie. J'entends les bons acteurs. Je m'accommoderais encore des autres! Mais ce sont les artistes excellents, comme ils se trouvent à la Comédie Française, que décidément je ne puis souffrir! Leur talent est trop grand; il couvre tout! Il n'y a qu'eux."

And again:

"J'en ai déjà fait l'aveu, j'aime les marionnettes, et celles de M. Signoret me plaisent singulièrement. Ce sont des artistes qui les taillent; ce sont des poètes qui les montrent. Elles ont une grâce naïve, une gaucherie divine de statues qui consentent à faire les poupées, et l'on est ravi de voir ces petites idoles jouer la comédie. . . . Ces marionnettes rassemblent à des hierogliphes Egyptiens, c'est-à-dire, à quelque chose de mystérieux et de pur, et, quand elles représentent un drame de Shakespeare ou d'Aristophane, je crois voir la pensée du poète se dérouler en caractères sacrés sur les murailles d'un temple."

And finally:

"Il y a une heure à peine que la toile du *Petit*

[1] See Appendix B for translation, some readers being, like myself, unable to read foreign languages.

Théatre est tombée sur le groupe harmonieux de Ferdinand et de Miranda. Je suis sous le charme et, comme dit Prospero, 'je me ressens encore des illusions de cette île.' L'aimable spectacle! Et qu'il est vrai que les choses exquises quand elles sont naïves, sont deux fois exquises." [1]

Thus Dancing, Pantomime and the Marionette, three essentials of the old Dramatic Art, have been allowed to go to seed, and people wonder why the Dramatic Art of to-day is so indifferent in quality, and the professors explain it by talking much about the Dramatic Characterisation, Logic of Construction, Three Unities, and so forth, and quote from Brunetière, Edmund Burke, and other wise men who study the moon by looking at it in ponds.

And then the Mask, that paramount means of dramatic expression, without which acting was bound to degenerate!

Used by the savages when making war at a time when war was looked upon as an art; used by the ancients in their ceremonies when faces were held to be too weak and disturbing an element; used by those artists of the theatre, Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides; found essential to their highest drama by the Japanese masters of the ninth and fourteenth centuries; rejected later on in the eighteenth century by the European actors, and relegated by them to the toy shop and the fancy-dress ball, the Mask has sunk to the level

[1] "La Vie Littéraire" et "Le Temps."

of the Dance, of Pantomime and of the Marionette. From being a work of art carved in wood or ivory and sometimes ornamented with precious metals or precious stones, and later made in leather, it has frittered itself away to a piece of paper, badly painted or covered with black satin.

I shall not here deal historically with the Mask for it is my particular wish not to divert the reader from the point at issue, which is the importance of the Mask to the life of the Theatre of to-day and of to-morrow. It is as important now as it was of old, and is in no way to be included among the things we have to put aside as old-fashioned ——must in no way be looked upon merely as a curiosity, for its existence is vital to the Art of the Theatre.

The historical study of this question will only assist those who already perceive the value and importance of reviving in the Theatre the famous and beautiful vitality of its earlier days. To those who know nothing of this value the historical study of the Mask is useless, for, like the dealer in antiques, they will but collect material for the sake of collecting, and any old thing, provided it be of good craftsmanship and excessively rare, will attract them.

I have spoken and written in praise of the Mask over and over again. I see the gain to the Theatre which is attached to this thing. What I tell is not new; it is what all artists know.

Human facial expression is for the most part

worthless, and the study of my Art tells me that it is better, provided it is not dull, that instead of six hundred expressions, but six expressions shall appear upon the face. Let us take an example:

The judge sits in judgment upon the prisoner, and he shall display but two expressions, each of which is in just proportion with the other. He has two masks and on each mask is one main *statement,* these statements being tempered by *reflections* —— the hopes and fears of not merely the judge, but of Justice and Injustice.

Drama which is not trivial takes us *beyond reality,* and asks a human face, the realest of things, to express all that. It is unfair.

It is this sense of being beyond reality which permeates all great art. We see it in the little clumsily painted pictures of those periods when the true *Beyond* was of more importance than a right perspective, when the perspective of thought and feeling held first value. We see it in the marvellous little Etruscan figures of but an inch high —— one faces me as I write —— a tiny little piece of bronze, charged with an overwhelming spirit, but which would be refused at the Royal Academies of to-day because, alas! its hand is as big as its head, and the toes of the foot are not defined; because it does not wriggle itself into a pose but is poised with firm conviction —— conviction, a thing detested by committees and hence refused admission to the Academies which are governed by them.

Masks carry conviction when he who creates them is an artist, for the artist limits the statements which he places upon these masks. The face of the actor carries no such conviction; it is over-full of fleeting expression —— frail, restless, disturbed and disturbing. It once would have seemed doubtful to me whether the actor would ever have the courage to cover his face with a mask again, having once put it aside, for it was doubtful whether he would see that it would serve as any gain. But now the time gives it proof, for the cinematograph favours the Art of the Theatre in that it reduces the number of theatres year by year.

The Mask will return to the Theatre; of that I grow ever more and more assured; and there is no very great obstacle in the way, although there is some slight danger attached to a misconception of its revival and a mishandling of its powers.

First of all it is not the Greek mask which has to be resuscitated; rather is it the world's mask which is going to be created. There is something very depressing in the idea of groping eastwards among ruins for the remains of past centuries. It is a great trade to-day, but not for the purposes of the Theatre. They dig for the marbles and the bronzes and the statuettes; they unearth tombs; they rummage even for crinolines of 1860; they admire these things.

The Theatre may admire the old Greek masks

and those of Japan and India, of Africa and America, but it must not dig in the ground for them; it must not collect them to copy them; it must not waste what power it has as a creator, in attending to its fads; it must not play the antiquary.

That such a danger as this exists and needs guarding against, is most evident. Some time ago, we do not know how far back (the collector knows), the world became tired of creating and took unto itself the rage for the old-fashioned.

"Pictures! Away with the young painters: let us fill our houses with the old paintings: drag them out of the churches, dig them out of the niches, peel them off the walls: get splendid prices for 'em: what does it matter? Hateful young men! Lovely Old Masters!

"Sculpture! Quick, fly to Greece! Now's the time! Nobody's looking —— occupied with affairs —— no money in the country, a lot of money in the ground; dig it all up: let sculpture go to the dogs, and let the old remains come back from Athens to fill our collections.

"Music! Some young musician wants his symphony played. Nonsense, costs too much; have discovered splendid new piece in little old shop for one fife and a drum; never heard anything like it before! Wonderful discovery! Tell the young man to take up chemistry."

This craze for the antique has become a general habit, and the more antique the more the craze.

Old furniture, houses packed with old furniture; old books, tapestries, all sorts of seedy metal work, even down to coins —— though here the one true collector, the millionaire, is careful to keep as modern as he can. And this love of the antique is growing so that to-day it is positively eating into the very people themselves, and they are becoming as antique as that which they collect, with this difference, that the old stuff has still some life in it and they have none.

This love of the antique has come into the Theatre now and then; it entered into England with William Poel and his Elizabethan Stage Society. Those who know Mr. Poel know him to be a man of distinction, cultivated, and an authority upon the stage of the sixteenth century. But what is that for the purpose of the living Theatre? All of us feel that those connected with the stage should be distinguished and cultivated, and authorities on all questions pertaining to the stage; but they should possess that only as a basis, and on that basis they should build anew and not merely exhibit the basis itself, saying, "Lo, the ruins of the sixteenth century! Tickets sixpence; plan of excavations, twopence extra."

There have been others besides Mr. Poel. There have been the revivalists of the so-called Greek Theatre —— a dreadful thing entirely in Greek. Those, too, who reproduced almost a facsimile of the Medieval Theatre; a group in Russia did this.

It would be a sad thing, therefore (as all resuscitation in art is so worthless), if masks, sham-Greek in idea and modern in their quality, should be brought into the Theatre, appealing only to the curious by creating a subject for small talk. No! the Mask must only return to the stage to restore expression —— the visible expression of the mind —— and must be a creation, not a copy.

There is a second danger —— the danger of the innovator. As Art must not be antique, neither can it be up-to-date. I think it is Whistler who points out that Art has no period whatever. It has only vitality or affectation, and under "affectation" come both the imitation of the antique and the up-to-date, what is to-day well called "the latest thing."

The vitality of an art depends upon its artists and their willingness to work under the laws which have ruled their art from the commencement. Not laws put down by committees to suit a period, but the commandments unspoken and uninscribed —— that nice Law of Balance which is the heart of perfect Beauty and from which springs Freedom, that Freedom which we hope and believe is the soul of Truth. To move incessantly towards this Truth is the aim of artists, and those of the Theatre must not lag behind.

As has been said many times before, this will be nothing new. I have said it is what the men of the Theatre began thousands of years ago: it is what the men of the Theatre relinquished a few

hundred years ago as beyond their strength. When we shall resume this we shall not be merely repeating; it will be no echo of a past century; the spirited reticence and passionate desire which led men to use the Mask in past ages should be the same now as it ever was, and should never die. It is such an inspiration as this that we should turn to and in which we should trust. Therefore let no one attempt to put this thing on one side into the antique shop, or on to the other as an eccentric explosion of Futurism. I anticipate that the public will of course be warned by those who have thought about it for the first time and see nothing but folly in the idea of the Mask as a possible proposition.

"And why do you trouble about the public and what it thinks?" I heard a cultivated man ask.

"Why, Sir? Because it is not the cultured alone for whom the Theatre cares, but for just those others——the Public——who have been left out in the cold by the other arts; for the artists of poetry, painting, and so forth often hold the public to be too vulgar ever to love their poems and pictures, and sweep them aside with the one word, "Philistines!"

These we (if I may speak for my fellow artists in the Theatre) care for. We are not eager to go our journey without them. We need their attention and interest, their sympathy and delight if possible, and, above all, their comradeship. They need not fear that we shall ask them to

sport a mask — but they must just see how it becomes us — and what fun and what fancy we can make within its shadow. Now do not be cross with us — do not trouble yourselves — show us a little sympathy; it becomes you, as our masks us.

ON MASKS

By a Bishop and by Me

A BISHOP once inveighed against modern showy sensationalism. He spoke in public in his cathedral. He regretted the money wasted by sightseers who found pleasure in witnessing men flying in the air, and other men and women "who paint their faces and appear on the stage."

"People go to the theatre," he said, "to see over-dressed bedizened people in bad paint, but they never stop to look at a daffodil in the valley."

I like and dislike this. Of course people stop and look long at all beautiful flowers; Nature is the god of thousands, perhaps more firmly than ever before; I might, if I so chose, have a word more to say on this score to the good Bishop.

But I like his mood, I like his intolerance: it is not hypocritical anyhow. It helps to wake people up.

But it does occur to me that should those same "over-dressed bedizened people in bad paint" attempt to emulate the beauty of the daffodil, the sightseers whom the Bishop lectured wouldn't stop to look at them. Would they even have waited to listen to the Bishop that Sunday had he fol-

lowed his own teaching and been more like unto the daffodil in the valley?

There are times when I feel drawn towards every one of these ill-painted and bedizened creatures in every theatre, booth or music hall in the wide world, for as men and women they are perhaps without exception the most charitable and often the most courageous upon earth. But there are other times when I am very much in sympathy with the reverend Bishop, and then I want to flay all these same bedizened creatures alive. For generosity I know none to surpass them; but for downright stupidity they deserve all they get. They are impossibly stupid. They allow good Bishops to make rude but true remarks about them, and *they take no pains to make such criticism impossible.* They remain gaudy, painted, theatrical in the bad sense of the word.

Of course the turn of the tide is coming, and when the flow commences, the Bishops and other churchmen will have to put their house in order, and if their house be a spiritual one all will be well; but let them see to it that they inure themselves to discomfort (the discomfort of some of those "bedizened ones"), for the ways of fate are strange, and to-day's ocean bed may be to-morrow's mountain range —— to-day's theatre may be to-morrow's church.

But to rise up from such a depth as that in which the Theatre is to-day sunken will demand no little disinterestedness.

Lose no time then. Begin by giving up your paint, or rather your "bad paint", as the Bishop rightly calls it. First of all the Bishop does not like it; secondly, no one else likes it; thirdly, you do not need it —— not bad paint.

Get to your masks, quickly. *When you learn their use and their invincible power, you will be better fitted to ascend.* To offer you the Church of the Future as your prize would be out of place, but you need never forget that you once possessed the Church of the Past.

This all comes from reading a paragraph about a Bishop of England and his true but unkind remark about our painted faces! How sensitive one is, to be sure!

FLORENCE, 1910.

SHAKESPEARE'S COLLABORATORS

HOW is it that the manuscript of Shakespeare's plays —— over thirty plays —— has never been found? How is it that not a page of his manuscript has been found? How is it that the manuscript has never reached us of a single play out of the thirty odd plays? It would have been a fine sight to see —— this manuscript of which Ben Jonson tells us that not a line was blotted.

So curious a document should have been preserved. Who destroyed it? Who took care that not a single page of manuscript should be handed down for us to see?

Was it destroyed by Shakespeare? And if so, why was he so careful to destroy the manuscript when the plays were already printed?

I believe that it was destroyed by Shakespeare, and for a very natural reason which we shall come to later on, and because he was a very human being and more of a literary man than an actor.

Many people have felt that there is a mystery behind the authorship of the Shakespearean dramas, and if some few find satisfaction in shifting the authorship from one individual, the many are not so satisfied; and, if anything continue to

seem mysterious, it is the simple fact that the whole series of dramas is something too colossal for one man to have created. Yet they cannot well see how two or three authors could sit year after year together and affably compose these turbulent, rollicking wonders.

I hazard a guess which is as much a guess as all the "evidence" brought together in large volumes about Shakespeare. I believe that there is a mystery about the authorship of the plays, but not a very deep one; and that for this reason it has eluded those sappers who have passed it while delving. I consider the mystery to be a subtle one, but not half so subtle as the Donellys and others would have us suppose.

In my opinion the Dramas were created by Shakespeare in close collaboration with the manager of the theatre and with the actors; in fact, with practically the whole of the company who invented, produced, and acted them; and I believe that a glimpse of the manuscript of the plays would reveal a mass of corrections, additions and cuts made in several handwritings. I believe that the improvisators —— and the comedians of that day were great improvisators —— contributed a great deal to the Comedies, and not a little to several of the Tragedies.[1] I believe that the plays *grew* to their present literary perfection, three distinct periods marking their development.

[1] I hope to be able at some later date to show which portions of the plays were contributed by the actors.

The first period saw them sketched out; the second saw them acted —— and at this period many speeches and even scenes were added from week to week, at rehearsal and after performances —— and the third period saw them handed over to the poet for revision before being printed.

When first printed in a collection the plays were in a very different state from that in which they were spoken from the stage. I do not believe the same words were spoken at the performances in the theatre as were read by those who received them in even their earliest printed form.

Any one who has compared the two texts of "Hamlet" —— that of 1603 and that of 1604 —— cannot help being struck by one fact; that is, that the 1603 version reads like a stage play, and the 1604 version like a literary play. It has been polished for the reader.

Every alteration is the improvement of a literary stylist bent on being as faultless as possible; the literary Shakespeare is uppermost for the time, and he polishes with a vengeance, and even succeeds in polishing away some of the life. It is as though a Giovanni Bellini had been at work polishing a Van Gogh.

There seems no doubt to me that the polisher was Shakespeare, the non-theatrical Shakespeare. He seems determined to save his work —— bent on clearing away the rubbish. He succeeds only too well, and clears away too much —— and the stage pays for it.

Mark the short space of time between the rough and the polished versions! In the case of "Hamlet" it took him only a year to polish the drama, the year 1603.

If we believe that Shakespeare was the polisher, can we be equally sure that he was the sole creator of these tremendous works? I cannot.

I believe that he was employed at the theatre to write up any rough draft by professional or non-professional playwrights, and to work upon the shapeless dramas of older writers,[1] or even that he filled in scenarios planned for the theatre by the directors.

But these were not the chief collaborators who worked with him upon the great series of thirty odd plays, the manuscript of which is utterly lost. His chief assistants were the actors.

That the poetry and beauty of some of the unique figures in the plays were born of Shakespeare's imagination I do not doubt, but I do most decidedly doubt whether the other part —— the huge material side of the dramas —— came from the poet. We should be less astounded at Shakespeare's accomplishment were his dramas less complete; if they lacked their grossness, their popular appeal, their naturalness, which, added to the sublimity of their poetic imagery, makes them seem too complete for one man to have created alone.

The naturalness of the dramas was, I believe,

[1] Or as in the case of "The Tempest" a younger writer.

wafted to England from Italy. Italy had awakened just previous to the birth of Shakespeare to a new sense of Drama. It was red-hot —— spontaneous —— natural. It appealed instantly, like the repartee of the peasants. There was something so apt, so right about the touch of this new Drama that its fitness was not decreased by the fact that hundreds of actors could give it birth.[1] It was not a literary effort, quite the reverse. It was good talk, wonderful patter. There was life in every sentence uttered —— life in every idea which poured out with that stream of words —— and often the highest distinction of expression.

I claim that Shakespeare's works are the fruit of a poet's collaboration with this newly formed dramatic art.

Let me take for example the Comedy of "Much Ado About Nothing", and especially the scenes beween Beatrice and Benedick.

These, in my opinion, are all improvised. The manager having planned out the story —— which he pieced together from old tales or having a poor play on the Hero and Claudio story in his desk, —— puts the material into the hands of Shakespeare, with this direction: that he is to "go easy" with the characters of Benedick, Beatrice, Dogberry and Verges, for these four rôles are to be played by the four first comedians, and these men know something about acting!

Shakespeare then sets to work. Hero and her

[1] See the history of "The Commedia dell' Arte."

story he elaborates lovingly, but leaves spaces when he comes to the comic scenes, and merely writes: "In this scene Benedick and Beatrice meet and speak together"; or, "Here Dogberry and the Watch."

Next the play passes into rehearsal——two or three rehearsals at most—during which the four principal comedians arrange together a little what they shall talk about.

Then comes the performance, when, stimulated by the close and eager presence of the spectators, they carry out their plans and improvise further ——brilliantly——usurping more than the share allotted to them by the playwright of action and interest. The framework of the play expands to fit them; the focus is altered. You will see that this has happened again and again in the other plays.

Perhaps you are aghast at what I suggest, and ask me heatedly if I mean really and seriously that during this first performance the two actors who played Benedick and Beatrice were capable of inventing on the spur of the moment——by the way, what a spur the spontaneous moment is to a really fine actor!——that brilliant passage commencing:

BEATRICE. "I wonder you will still be talking, Signor Benedick! Nobody marks you."

BENEDICK. "What, my dear Lady Disdain! Are you yet living?"

I have the greatest pride in replying on behalf

of the actors of the sixteenth century. Yes, they were equal to inventing that passage and very many others, such as the Benedick and Beatrice scenes, Act 2, Scene I; and Act 4, Scene I; besides the Dogberry scenes in Acts 3, 4 and 5. All these, I consider, must in great part be attributed to the actors.

Indeed, much of the Elizabethan Comedy is the work of the actors, produced in that spontaneous manner; many of those brilliant flashes of genius which have helped to give Shakespeare the position he holds to-day were first struck out in the sharp encounter of wits on the boards of the stage. But although we may quite easily believe this —— as every one who has studied the history of the " Commedia dell' Arte " will believe it —— we may also be sure that the repartee was not exactly the same at the first as at the fiftieth performance. In fact, we may be positive that it varied very much at every performance; but during those fifty representations the best part of the actors' improvisations were recorded by some scribe —— perhaps even by Shakespeare —— and written into the manuscript.

Later on, Shakespeare, knowing that the plays were to be published, took the whole play and polished it; and if he removed some of its spontaneity and doubtless some of its grossness, he left in the richest, cleverest part of the decoration which those actors of genius had contributed to the structure.

I feel certain that, placed as he was as Playmaker-in-Chief to the Theatre, he determined to be revenged on all those secondary characters which were never able to hold the audience, being played by inferior actors while the chief players were doing things "on their own"; that he waited his time, gathered together the strings of suggestion, and cleaned, tightened and made them beautiful by threading on them pearl after pearl of his poetry, each one more precious than another. But the strings——I claim them for those masters of improvisation, the actors; for the actors I claim part authorship of the world's masterpieces.

The two scenes where Benedick overhears his friends talking about Beatrice, and she overhears her friends talking about Benedick, are partly the creative work of the actors, partly that of the poet. In the second of these two scenes the poet has gathered together the gist of the speeches of the actors, and has given it to us again in a far more lovely form than it could ever have possessed originally. But if you remove many of these lovely passages of Beatrice you do not alter the shape of the play; in fact, you improve it somewhat if you condense it into the true drama. Hero and her story is far more important when we are not attracted away from her by the thought that perhaps Beatrice is a more poetic, a purer and a lovelier woman than all the Heros in the world.

Turning to other plays, who if not the actors invented the rôles of Pistol (the Italian Capitano in an English dress), Bardolph, Lancelot Gobbo and old Gobbo, Doctor Caius (the Italian Dottore in a French dress), Sir Hugh Evans, Simple, Slender, Justice Shallow, Grumio, Biondello, Sir Toby Belch, Sir Andrew Aguecheek, Trinculo ——and how many more? Not one actor—— no Shakespeare-actor——invented them, but *actors,* a group collaborating, acting in unison, attempting each one to outdo the other, as it were to act the other off the stage.

If to-day actors cannot improvise, if wit and repartee have fled from the Theatre to the music hall, from Mounet-Sully and Novelli to Lauder and Petrolini, it was not so in the sixteenth century. It was a Petrolini who invented Dogberry and a Lauder who created Launce——and no one knows how vulgar Launce was in 1600, though we may guess. And if any one doubt how brilliant the lighter comedians could be, those who would have played Benedick, Touchstone, and Malvolio, Beatrice and Rosalind, let him compare these records with the comedies of Molière, which likewise originated in the traditions of the "Commedia dell' Arte", by that time quite familiar to every one in England and France.

Molière and Shakespeare are the despair of all later playwrights.

Let them despair no longer. They can do what Molière and Shakespeare did again and again;

all they need is to find actors who will do half the great task for them. And let not the actors be any longer puzzled because they cannot get these Shakespearean sentences out of their mouths without choking; the Elizabethan polish once removed, all goes easily once more.

There can be, of course, no question of "treating" Shakespeare's works in such a manner. They are best left as they were. But see how the instinct of every actor and every actor-manager leads him to cut away all the very highly polished bits, and — alas! — to deliver the rest in as unpolished a manner as possible. Instinct on the stage counts for something, and in this way the actor-managers, like hounds on the scent of the fox, indicate clearly which way Reynard has escaped.

This is the secret which defies us; we wonder at the unity of the vast whole of the plays, and at the same time at their pandemonium. It does not seem to us possible that the brain of one man, be he Shakespeare, Bacon, or another, can have achieved such an overwhelming contradiction. The world-masterpieces are generally the product of many minds —— each sums up an age and humanity: Allow Shakespeare his contemporary fellow-workers, the actors, and the riddle becomes clear.

FLORENCE, 1913.

IN A RESTAURANT

WATCHING the stream of waiters and the eaters, I feel conscious of the presence of a certain spirit of the Theatre. Here is no play certainly, no words; and no series of incidents, no development of any greater character. Yet it is Drama. It is enough: there is an impression, and a strong one, created by these two ideas——the idea of the eaters and their feeding: the idea of the servers and their service.

Then comes on me the wish to attempt to transport on to the stage that which is before me. To do this I must give it a form. Full of interest I start.

I find the conventional forms are useless. No five-act play is before me; no Tragedy, no Comedy. A study——a sketch, an impression, a specimen. The eaters and the serving-men. Strangest medley of manners at surface, with under-currents even stranger.

How treat this impression of half an hour, how hint at the hidden by unveiling that which may be seen?

Two treatments: and the easier occurs the quicker to me. The modern characterisation of the modern play. For the moment I see no other

opening. The powerful picture of two of the eaters, their amazingly entertaining actions, their particular little ways never alike for an instant, the air of friendship which passes from one to the other and the more certain under-current —— the sense of animosity. Two beings from different worlds, but each a snob; both rich but common men; they seem to resemble two animals I have seen —— the long protracted dinner with its courses ever on the crescendo; the cackle of pompous insipidity.

And then the more serious human element, the waiters, the only workers in the room. Each a personality, and a very marked one.

The first evidently owns a couple of horses in the country and possibly has his own gardener who attends carefully to the peaches. The second might be the son of some sea captain; with him is the sea's tinge of melancholy, but with all the airs of a gentleman. One imagines him dressed in the uniform of a naval officer, and somehow it would suit him. A third would wear with a grace the army uniform, and judging by his keen eye, his courteous manipulation of the guests and swift control over the hundred hidden cooks, he must be a man of personal magnetism. All of these men are distinguished. Nearly all have the manners of gentlemen.

And to bring the whole impression on to the stage? Although the method of characterisation seemed at first the easier one, there now appear

unsurmountable barriers. For we must consider our means, our material.

If we are to show all this intricate work in detail, we need actors of personality to undertake each rôle. We may draw twelve strongly defined characters, and we shall look in vain for twelve such actors of character in one theatre. We might find twelve such if we had thirty theatres to pick from each one man. For the subtlety, the humour, the exceedingly delicate differences and strangely interesting manner of each of the figures in this scene is extraordinary. And not merely is it difficult for lack of actors; for in a way actors would be wasted. Pantomimists, that is to say, the actor at his best, would be of more use; but alas, few pantomimists exist. And then, although it is the waiters who make the most impression on me as I sit here watching them, when we come to transfer it to a platform or a canvas it is not necessarily through these figures of the waiters that we shall produce the same impression as I am now receiving. More likely will it be through something to do with line, colour, movement —— things far removed from impersonation or representation —— which has little to do with the reproduction of actualities.

So that the treatment must be a fresh one. Characterisation is of no use here. And not for this reason alone, not merely for lack of actors. This impression is not to be brought before us on the stage by means of a realistic treatment in

which characterisation plays the all-important part, but by a fantastic treatment, a sweeping glance, the impression seized *en masse,* the individuals merged in the Atmosphere or Tone. Then and then only is it possible to put on the stage this impression which is without a story and must remain also without characterisation —— to show this stream of waiters —— men who have chosen a joyful and artistic service, that of bringing food from the kitchen (which to us is the Unknown) to the eaters, and who do their service in a masterly way, pouring out a glass of water as they would pour out a glass of the most rich and costly wine, handing a roll of bread as though it would break and spoil if passed hurriedly through the air —— who by and through their life which they are revealing to me as they pass hurriedly to and fro are revealing much more than their mere external life, who raise that life into a kind of ideal existence for me.

Therefore facts are to be dimly shown, only by suggestion, not by statement. And this suggestion is not to be produced by merely cutting down the present material used in the theatre, by lowering the lights upon the present material, or by manipulating it with more reserve, but by choosing new material altogether. For the Art of the Theatre is after all to reveal, to show by means of movement a glimpse or a vision of all things. And to this vision belongs proportion far more than all else.

We can no longer be put off with the modern makeshift. Man and the voice of man —— that little personality and that little voice —— loom far too large in the modern theatre and throw all things out of proportion, destroying all harmony by their aggressiveness. And this single impression of the eaters and the waiters is but one of many that the Theatre was born to convey; and it can convey such impressions —— be they either of eating, of travelling or of meditating, of common things or of high things —— only by the second treatment I have spoken of, the imaginative and impressionistic treatment. And great actors are not needed for such work. Their talent or genius is in the development of character, and, as I have said, character has here dwindled, and we see but fifteen figures who pass and repass, by their acts and actions starting a certain rhythm, conveying a certain sense: the other two figures who are seated by their movements complete that rhythm.

And why have I said nothing of words, of character, plot, story as told by words? These indeed shall play their part in the general impression, but their part is, as it were, but to add touches of colour; they shall bring colour to the impression —— a colour of sound, and not a noisy and vulgar exhibition of sound which on our stages of to-day degenerates into chatter or shouting. So that the words will not be to explain, to make mathematically clear, to lay bare. Our

impression of these few moments (like most of our impressions) is a strangely suggestive vision, all vague, yet clear enough to those who have eyes and senses to understand: so clear that we who watch can supply the words, the very thoughts of these figures who eat and who wait. Therefore in bringing our impressions to you we must leave it vague, yet clear enough for——you.

And will not all this be very dull? you ask.

Indeed, the opposite of dull——delightful! I have chosen the most ordinary impression for my illustration, and you will easily see how a far higher and more carefully selected theme would respond to such a treatment. The higher we go the easier and the more delightful. A long sustained impression such as the great writers from Æschylus to Maeterlinck give us——that I do not claim, that is not in the nature of such visions; for what Poe tells us is true of poems is doubly true of visions——there can be no such thing as a long one. Let them glide into being, live for a few moments and then fade.

FLORENCE, 1908.

"LITERARY" THEATRES

THOSE people who are interested at all times in creating what is called a "Literary Theatre" would do well to remember the dangers which beset such unnatural efforts. Unfortunate has been the end of all such attempts.

For nearly thirty years Goethe struggled in conjunction with Schiller to create for the Germans a new Theatre. Although Goethe was more than poet, he was first a poet, and everything else in him kept time to the words which he sang. He set out to create a literary stage; he would not have it that the stage should be, as he rather weakly calls it, "the reflection of natural life in amusing mirrors." And so he marshalled his army of words —— all of them to assault the Theatre —— stood in the midst and watched his veritable Thirty Years' War, his battle of words against visions, sacked the Theatre, razed it to the ground, and then, scanning the horizon, was surprised that the Theatre was no more to be seen. In fact, even he, the greatest man of his age, utterly fails here to understand what the Art of the Theatre might be.

And now there are others, if not the greatest men of their age, talented in great measure, who

court the same failure in attempting this impossible and fantastic thing.

I should have thought the artists would understand the charming separation which must ever exist between the arts. I have no fear for the Theatre; I do not believe it can suffer any harm even by an assault such as that made upon it by Goethe; but wishing to see less confusion in the public mind as to what the Art of the Theatre is and what it is not, I must ever protest against the unnecessary deception of the public in this, to me, most important matter.

When literary men shall be content and patient enough to study the Art of the Theatre as an art separate from the Art of Literature, there will be nothing to prevent us from welcoming them into the house.

FLORENCE, 1908.

ART OR IMITATION?

A Plea for an Enquiry after the Missing Laws of the Art

"The Most High has deigned to do honour to mankind; he has endowed man with boundless passions, together with a law to guide them, so that man may be alike free and self-controlled; though swayed by these passions man is endowed with reason with which to control them."

JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU, "EMILE."

THIS is said in reference to Life. Now will you give a little thought to this in relation to the arts which are the mirrors of Life, and which, though born of the passions, and conceived in freedom, can only be perfected and made durable by the aid of laws.

The Most High has given us passions by which we may create all things; and he has given us a law that we may create them well.

Now, whatever the artist may have done in the past, whatever powers he possessed, however great his *ability* to create in those days, he seldom forgot to employ that law which Rousseau tells us we have been given to control the boundless creative power.

It was not with a boundless passion alone that the masters created the church of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, the Alhambra in Granada, and

Rheims Cathedral. It was by that passion plus the law of reason, and you may search far and wide and find no example of great art which has been created without the control of reason, no example created without the impetus of passion.

The passions have by natures no rules, rules no passion. Reason is given us by which to make rules for passion.

Architects, musicians, poets, painters, sculptors,[1] all but one group of artists have understood the need for making rules and keeping to them, and have vied with one another to make their works more perfect by perfecting these rules.

The one group who till now have not cared is the group of the artists of the Theatre. And to this I believe must be attributed the failure of their art, for I suggest that it has failed. It is not a Fine Art. And for good reasons ——

These artists have allowed themselves to slip into an awkward situation from which it will not be easy to extricate themselves; but this they must try hard —— and, indeed, are now trying to do.

They fell into the trap which the passions know so well how to set. Had they used reason, they would never have been caught.

They seemed to have no fear of the passions. Why, they actually imitated them!

How, you cannot forget yourself even to the extent of imitating another man's actions, ex-

[1] Even if they have often ruthlessly broken the rules there have been rules to break, which is everything.

pression and voice without risking his displeasure (although it may amuse the passerby) should he observe you, and when he appears you cease from your parody.

Why is this? It is that you know there is something fundamentally wrong in Imitation —— that Imitation is a form of mockery.

If, then, you cannot mimic even a man without displeasing him and deserving his reproach, how can a race of artists expect to mimic Nature and mankind and its passions without offending all of these and inviting their revenge? Imitation, except in a good-natured comic spirit (and on rare occasions), is distasteful to everything in Nature; it irritates, it angers, or it bores.[1] Yet a whole race of artists —— those of the Theatre —— have thought to imitate with impunity, to do this and escape retribution, and have devoted themselves to this strange task. I advance the opinion that it is unreasonable of them.

Mankind's revenge has been to bring the Theatre down and keep it down in the dust. On seeing this mimicry and mockery of their world and of themselves, all those whom it did not touch personally laughed, remembering the weaknesses of their neighbours; but when it touched upon

[1] Madame Yvette Guilbert has said to me that if she were asked to find reasons why women should not be on the stage, one of them would be: . . . "that women as mothers of the race are often forced to parody the act of love, and from this an ordinary man in an audience, even possessed of no great subtlety of feeling, turns away wearily."

their own weaknesses they laughed no more. Finding the Theatre bent upon mocking at everything and everybody, the whole of mankind made up its mind to join in the laugh, so as to divert suspicion that the cap fitted. By this means they disarmed mockery, and by letting the Theatre have its joke they reduced its power.

Do you find this startlingly new? I am sure it is not a new truth, but it is quite likely that it appears new.

We have let the old Western Theatre have its head for centuries, for we made up our minds long ago not to treat it seriously. It was for our diversion. I hope it will always be diverting as long as we need distraction, and its more eccentric moods can always be depended on to serve that purpose if we are discreet and do not let it swamp us with *over*-diversion. Our eccentric comedians are one of the world's blessings, our vaudeville is surely an institution which is necessary to the State and worthy of every support. But to have allowed tragedy, high melodrama, comedy, ballet and opera in the last few years to become only a diversion (that and nothing more), this is unworthy of reasonable men——of those alike of the State, the public and the art.

To be able to feel that the Theatre includes diversion, and that amusement is in the nature of its art is to realize that it possesses a quality not possessed by, let us say, the arts of architecture and music, and that it is the richer for this quality.

But to develop this quality peculiar to itself at the expense of the other qualities common to all the fine arts upon which they have based their strength, is short-sighted.

We know how the State looks upon the matter. To the State the Theatre is of use, even as drugs, pills and powders are of use to the physician; for the State realizes that the public needs something to deaden its pains, it shrugs its shoulders and prescribes for its patient some diversion —— a little Circus, a little Theatre —— and writes on the label of the bottle, "To be taken when you like." They don't think it can do the public much harm, especially as the public is so fond of the Theatre and the Circus.

"Leave it to them," say the statesmen. So the Art of the Theatre has for many a century been the popular art, controlled by the public for the public; and the artists of the Theatre and the actors have had to learn to supply the public with what the public wants, and the public finds it an inexpensive diversion on the whole; a perennial comfort, a source for conversation and argument, and a matter about which they feel they have bought the right to cackle.

And they have some right. They have paid a few dollars for it, and can "stop the allowance" if and when they like; they can make or unmake an actor or actress, can ruin a play or a season at a theatre; it is their toy which they can play with, tire of, and break.

Exactly. But so long as it is so, it abdicates its rights among the Arts.

We see then that the fault for existing conditions lies partly in the indifference of the State, partly in the nature of the public, but chiefly in the weakness of the artists who have permitted any interference with their Art. Let us, the artists, blame ourselves.

The public overhears us——what of that? If formerly we wished to keep up a mystery about our profession, nowadays we have become less sensitive about admitting our failures, for we begin to realize that they need bringing into the open court.

Already we have begun to do this.

The change that has come over the Theatre in the last fifteen years is due to a handful of men and women who have realized that our Theatre was pretty well in its way, but have asked whether we were going to be content to sit down and fold our hands and leave it at that, or get up and make it better.

These few men and women for the most part belong to the Theatre, and in some cases, while directing it into new channels, have retired from taking any active part in any particular theatre. Standing apart, they have hinted, suggested, sketched, planned and written, and the more advanced managers and their assistants have put their suggestions (rather timidly) into practise. Thus, to take one example: M. Appia plans some-

thing which is scouted by these managers; in a short while, however, the same manager "lifts" a part of M. Appia's idea. The idea thus, in a diluted or modified form, finds its way into the Theatre, but it is not M. Appia himself who brings it there.

This is not the right method of procedure, but possibly the best one under the circumstances. We shall find better ones as time goes on. One of these would be to give these few "reformers", as they are called, a theatre or two apiece in which to work out their own ideas. There are so many theatres to spare, and so few "reformers" —— or rather, so few men with ideas of any exceptional value.

I have been myself included among the few "reformers." I wonder if I am one? It all depends upon the meaning with which the word is used. If it is meant, as so often, to denote a vague being of nebulous views, then I certainly am not a reformer, for my intentions are most clear and practical. Nor am I one if the word be used for one who is a specialist, a hot partisan for some special department, for some special style of his own.

This latter is the sense in which the term is usually meant, and is generally true when applied to those concerned with this new movement in the Theatre; for, while one thinks only of acting and reforming that, another thinks only of lighting; a third only of scene; a fourth only of costume;

a fifth of the classic drama; a sixth of the Elizabethan drama; a seventh of the dance only, and so on; and I differ from them all in that I am no specialist. I can have nothing to do with the Theatre except as a whole.

To me its art and organization are indivisible. All that concerns its physical body and all that concerns its essence and spirit——that and nothing less than that concerns me, and I could as soon forget a branch of the art, or an intention underlying a single experiment of a single theatre, whether it be in India, Russia, Paris or New York, as I could forget one of the fingers of my hand.

To me it seems that there is room for all, so all be good of their kind and in their right places. Therefore, rather than a "reformer" I should be more truly described, in relation to the Theatre, as one who would put things in order.

I do not know if it is yet widely enough realised that "putting in order" is the peculiar task of the artist, whereas it is the spirit of the reformer to destroy; and that this putting in order, with the consequent elimination of what is valueless, is the artist's essential work.

So that while my fellow-workers are occupied, some with acting, some with dancing, some with decorations and some with writing plays, each in the hope that his own especial branch of the art, if satisfactorily enough practised, will revive the art and establish its right to be well spoken of,

I find myself unable to accept their theory, for experience refutes it.

I might specialise in one or all of these directions and interest a section of the public and thus test some doubtful theories, and enjoy the exercise; but not in the belief that I was putting forth a masterpiece which would restore the Theatre its lost Art, for experience has long shown the vanity of that.

I am very certain that a hundred productions, even if prepared by the men of greatest genius in the theatre, could not do that, not even if in each production a new experiment should be made by the poet, painter, musician or actor. Why not? Because there are the Laws of the Art which must first be established and recognized, and afterwards obeyed.

To attempt to obey these laws we must first know what they are —— a rather difficult thing; and then what could be more difficult than to follow them? Conceive for yourselves, you who know something of the way in which a modern production gets on to the stage, conceive the directors of a theatre trying to follow even the traditional laws which we are already aware of, conceive their failure to do even that!

One would fancy that the well-known Art Theatres might be expected to follow the few known traditions with some firmness and a determination not to give in. In Moscow, New York and Paris this might be attempted. I don't say

it is attempted. Traditions are the things these theatres most despise, while always forced in the end to resort to them.

If one throws away traditions (and the Art Theatres protest that they do so), we must invent new ones. How can we do without laws? New systems are invented, new laws never. For a law is older than a system and is fixed from the beginning of things. We make systems, we discover laws; and all the techniques in the world cannot lead to the discovery of one law. There are countless techniques in architecture and music, but the laws are few, and quite other than these.

And if, knowing all this, we come quietly to consider the situation, we shall find that it is really a very serious one.

Here we have an art appealing to millions —— still more popular with them where the other arts fail in their appeal; and this art, like a rudderless ship, plays the derelict.

The public is influenced by the theatre perhaps more even than by journalism, for its appeal is through the senses to the public taste and feeling, whereas journalism appeals through and to something different. And is the taste and feeling of the public not something which needs watching carefully and protecting?

I believe that if we have an art made by, and dealing with, such boundless passions as Rousseau speaks of, we should attempt to control it by means of that law which he tells us the Most

High has given to man to control those passions —— Reason.

In dramatic literature the Greeks and Elizabethans employed laws; the Greek laws were sterner than the English, and we are told that the Greeks even employed well-laid-down laws in regard to the *representation* of their dramas. We gather some hints of these, but of the whole we have no textbook, and as to the net result to the representation we are quite in the dark.

Added to this, even if all the laws existed, cut on tables of stone, we have so lost belief in our Art being an Art that we should pooh-pooh them. Cheerful situation, is it not? Yet we must face it and alter it.

What these laws of the European Theatre were might be ascertained by diligent and intelligent investigation, especially by comparing the clues with those examples of theatrical art and learning which India, China, Persia and Japan have still to offer us.

And by means of such an inquiry we could perhaps arrive at some idea of what a law of the Art of the Theatre should be, because we should have eliminated all the rubbish which now confuses us and covers the valuable truths.

Here, then, is the situation.

We believe it necessary in every art to establish and follow some laws. The architect and the musician, the two primary artists, cannot work without them.

Yet in the Theatre we wander aimlessly along, continually labouring without laws to guide us, content century by century to allow mimicry and imitation to usurp the place of art.

So that those amongst us wishing to see a stronger and more natural plant growing up in place of, or beside, this too artificial and effeminate modern product, must, I think, turn their thoughts in the direction that I have indicated ——I think they must help us to search for the laws.

It is *one* of the things we have to do.

FLORENCE, 1915.

A CONVERSATION WITH JULES CHAMPFLEURY

G. C. Come, my dear Champfleury, let us take our coffee here at the Café Procope. Now tell me, what was it you were beginning to say about Pantomime and the Mask?

CHAMPFLEURY. Why, an experienced vaudevillist was speaking to me one day of pantomime, and he said to me, "Where do your pieces take place?" Not understanding him, I begged him to explain himself, and he said that he meant to ask me in what town or capital were Pierrot, Columbine and Harlequin supposed to be living their adventurous life.

G. C. Well, of course you told him?

CHAMPFLEURY. Yes, I told him that the question which was apparently so simple was a very fount of folly. I told this old vaudevillist who was taking an interest in pantomime, that the adventurous life of these people has no home. And he then told me that he thought that there was some traditional country, and that he guessed it to be Bergamo.

G. C. And was he very wrong?

CHAMPFLEURY. Well, I told him that I cared no more for Venice than for Bergamo.

G. C. Well, but, because you care no more for Venice than for Bergamo, is that any reason that the old vaudevillist should not be rather pleased at the idea of being able to find Arlecchino's native town? Am I not right in believing that Arlecchino was an Italian, and that Arlequin is a Frenchman, and that Harlequin is an Englishman? And don't you think it is rather amusing, and perhaps much more than that, to think of old Arlecchino the Italian of the old town of Bergamo visiting other cities of Italy, but under no circumstances crossing the Alps?

CHAMPFLEURY. What is the use of this limitation to any one town? You seem to agree with the old vaudevillist that pantomime has a particular geography, just as you shall be pleased to invent for it.

G. C. Wait, I was not speaking about pantomime, for pantomime is universal. I was speaking about what you are speaking about; that is to say certain types, certain masks, which belong to the Commedia dell' Arte, and therefore to Italy. You mentioned Pierrot, Columbine and Harlequin, and I answered you about Harlequin, and I led Harlequin back to himself —— to Arlecchino, and taking him there, I also took him back to Bergamo. But now, with a disregard for that logic for which your whole nation is so famous, you switch off from one pantomimist —— from one Mask —— from Arlecchino, and connect up with all the wires of the realm of Pantomime.

I think that Arlecchino distinctly has a land of his own; and that is, as I have said, Italy, and his particular place is Bergamo.

CHAMPFLEURY. Very well. Let us confine ourselves to the types, to the Masks themselves, and then let me assure you that the country of Pierrot is no actual country.

G. C. Acrobat! How unfair you are to me! You juggle with Pierrot now that I have disposed of Arlecchino —— Pierrot, who is essentially a Frenchman, and with whom you have a right to do as you like. You offer him up on the altar of Cosmopolis in hope of propitiating the gods. He is the creation of the poetic spirit, he has no land, according to you. But you know perfectly well that he is in Paris, he is essentially Parisian; and as I am not an Italian you won't mind if I tell you that I think him a trivial sort of person by the side of the other great figures of the Comedy. A sentimental insignificant sort of person.

CHAMPFLEURY. But I repeat, Pierrot has no country, and I will tell you why. The scenery at Les Funambules ——

G. C. Les Funambules? But what the Dickens has Les Funambules to do with it? You almost suggest that Les Funambules is Pierrot's own country, and that Pierrot's special town is one particular theatre.

CHAMPFLEURY. One moment, let me explain! The country of Pierrot, the real Pierrot, Funambules or no Funambules, is not a real country.

The actual scenery in the theatre is too full of illusion. My forests there are too like forests; my houses too like real houses. All the scenery is so bourgeois that the Théatre de l'Odéon might not some day be sorry to buy it all up. Why, there are little yellow rooms which would do well for the works of M. Galloppe d'Onquaire, and one of the dramas at the Ambigu would go well in Pierrot's Forest Scene at the Funambules, and the hut of Cassandre would suit one of Bouffé's performances like a glove. The Theatre of the Funambules is very illogical. Be false, be false, from one end to the other, and you will be true.

G. C. Acrobat! You may be true to yourself there, but not to nature. You will be true to your deception, for you are deceived about pantomime in general, as well as Pierrot. I have been in a country theatre myself, and Hamlet and Othello have walked on to a stage that was decorated to look rather like a modern lodging-house front room. But it was because we were obliged to put up with such a scene, not because we chose it. Although I can tolerate Hamlet and Othello, the children of the poetic fancy, in any surroundings, I cannot say that they are well placed in every chance place. In the same way I could also tolerate Arlecchino under such conditions, but it is quite another thing to say that he has no country and is at home *everywhere.*

As well might you say that a butterfly has no special surroundings. You will find that this

natural Arlecchino, this butterfly, is surrounded by certain special flowers, and certain special seasons, certain special lights. You very seldom find him in a cow-house, but you will certainly find him in the garden. You will not find him flying in Waterloo Place or the Rue de la Paix, but there is no doubt about it you will find him in the Bois de Boulogne; and yet he doesn't suit the Bois de Boulogne so well as he will suit the old garden of some old French château or some English farmhouse.

It seems to me quite wrong to say that living things have not their definite habitation, their distinct background, their particular environment. The briar rose——is not that of England, particularly England? The palm tree——is not that of Egypt? Particularly Egypt? And as for people, take an English type (not quite Harlequin, but as good a type) the coster; and put him in any surroundings, something fantastic——for example, a room covered with pearlies, and painted the colour of his donkey's skin. It is perhaps pretty, but wrong for the coster, for he belongs to London more than to his donkey, more than to his pearlies.

CHAMPFLEURY. But that is realism, whereas realism doesn't occupy a thumb's breadth on a canvas by Watteau. His trees are the same as his people, his sky has been painted to make these trees grow. How can you expect my soul not to be troubled when I see Arlequin in a real house?

There should be spangles on the wall, and Polichinelle's apartment must be full of humps, and the pretty little attic that I shall build for Columbine must be coquettish, with flowers, a charming bed, etc. There is always an intimate co-relation between the individual and his furniture.

G. C. All that is just what I was saying.

CHAMPFLEURY. Yes, but my personages are fantastic. All that is around them becomes fantastic. If in real life the individual moulds himself upon Nature, in pantomime Nature moulds itself upon the individual.

G. C. You would be perfectly right if these personages were——may I say it?——*your* personages, and if they *were* fantastic; but they are not your personages; they are the personages of Venice and Bergamo and Naples, and only Pierrot and Columbine belong to you. Do with these what you will, make them if you like fantastic, artificial; but do not destroy the force of these greater older fellows whose land is Italy, and who out of Italy become insipid and therefore a bore.

I see no objection to having spangles on the wall for a man who dresses in spangles, and who thinks in spangles, and who talks in a spangled way. But who put spangles on Arlecchino? You in Paris did it, and we did it in England. The Italians never did it. The Italians could never do so silly a thing. We, so poor in imagination, so rich in spangles, did this damnable deed

ourselves. We are both to blame, so we need have no disagreement, but let us own up to the wretched business and not attempt by illogical logic to smooth the matter out.

And supposing Pulcinella has a hump? Lots of the other "Gobbos" in Italy were and are the same. Many personages in the Commedia dell' Arte had humps, just as many of them had long noses. Then what would be peculiar in Pulcinella's having humps all over the room?

To begin with, it is distracting and helps to explain nothing, helps us to feel nothing, merely prevents us from feeling the emotion which the entrance of Pulcinella will create when he comes on the scene. How can it really trouble your soul ——your soul, my good soul——when you see Harlequin in a real house? *Real stage house,* you mean; for neither I nor you ever yet saw a real house on the stage, and you never saw Harlequin anywhere except in a stage house.

If you are talking about reality, then set him in the open air——that is where Arlecchino lived in Italy——at the corner of some street, against some palace; he leaned there in the sun and delivered his monologues. Does that reality offend you? That is the real reality. Why cite Watteau in support of your theory, telling me that Watteau is not concerned with reality and that, as his trees are of the same family as his figures, our scene for Harlequin must be laid on with a hump for our trowel?

You are wrong to try and convince yourself of a falsity by bringing in these Frenchmen who misunderstood the Masks, great artists though they may be, to prove something about the Italians. Watteau never understood what Arlecchino was; he never even understood your French Arlequin; he invented another being altogether, just as we later on invented Harlequin.

CHAMPFLEURY. Well, we French are undoubtedly anti-natural, but with it all we are amusing, gay, nimble and subtle; we hardly worry ourselves about entrances or exits; some one cuts off Polichinella's leg in the first tableau; in the second tableau he dances better than ever and one has not even heard a whisper of the doctor.

G. C. I agree with you, my dear Champfleury. You are anti-natural, as you say, and delightful; but I think you do wrong to cause what is really natural, that is to say, what is really beautiful and strong, to be made merely amusing, gay and subtle. And why should it only be a light jest to cut off Pulcinella's leg in a first tableau and then to see him dancing better than ever in a second? Why should not that be something with a little more passion in it? Why should your French shrug of the shoulders try to take the place of all the great Italian gestures? In both lands it is the same shrug, but what a vast difference in the meaning! How differently we all feel about it! The Italian shrug exhibits heroic

strength in the face of disaster. You, you Frenchmen, put your finger to your nose when you shrug your shoulders in the face of disaster.

It is a contempt for disaster that possesses you. The Italian links his arm with the great figure of Fate, and in gay and earnest conversation with him strolls down Lung' Arno —— and is found later on floating a long way out of the town among the rushes, his face in a mask.

Well, we have talked enough —— we who should never talk —— who should make a gesture or two and listen to the learned. Shall we go down to the river and watch things move? It was nice to have met each other, and defied the years, the grave, and the coffee at the Procope.

PARIS, 1912.

NOTE. Jules Champfleury was born at Laon in 1821 and died at Paris in 1889. Besides other works, he wrote many pantomimes for the Théatre des Funambules, first made famous by the greatest Pierrot of his time, Gaspard Debureau. It was in the years subsequent to Debureau's death that Champfleury prepared his pantomimes; and his experience during those years and the conclusions to which he had come upon the various Schools of Pantomime are embodied in a book called "Souvenirs des Funambules", which he published in 1859. His conversation in this duologue is his own and I have not invented it. I have but woven into it my own answers or questions.

G. C.

THE THEATRE IN ITALY: NAPLES AND POMPEII

A Letter to John Semar

My dear Friend,

I WAS wont to write you letters from cold places north of Florence —— there was little or nothing to write of. But now I have come south to see what a warmer theatre can yield. Enough of the cold philosophical metaphysical cruel theatre of the north.

I write from Pompeii after a visit to those two men of genius, the brothers Vettii.

How I came to meet them is simply told.

I was last night at Scarpetta's theatre: that *simpatico* theatre in Naples where all that is to be laughed at is spread before us on the stage and laughed in and out of existence without a thought too much to oppress us. All the difference between this breed which gives birth to laughter and the breed on the London stages whose cacklings, even, miscarry.

Scarpetta exists, and we know he is of flesh and blood. Shaw to me does not live, and is something other than flesh and blood. I feel that had Dante lived to-day in the ugly north and con-

descended to write for the stage he would have produced just such a series of pleasant and unpleasant and popular comedies as G. B. S.

Another thing I feel about Scarpetta is that he wouldn't care a hang what women said or thought about his plays, and I guess (knowing what they *knew* about all things), perhaps wrongly, that the great brain laughter of Shaw is only quite ironic enough, only sufficiently deadly, when it has received the full approval of the Shaw ladies.

By the way, I ought to tell you who Scarpetta is.

He is the author-actor of Naples, that is to say, one of our few real dramatists. His drama came into being by the grace of improvisation (you know what that is — impulse — fire — sparks — you know) and as we know by now, that is the only way real drama can be born. All other dramas are made — patchworks, not good woven stuffs — and impotent things.

His improvisations are not just witty conversations — secco, like dried figs — in which a few people ridicule, in a few well-chosen words, certain groups, cliques or national peculiarities; his improvisations have to deal with the *Life* of every one. In the sharpest cut given the lash winds itself lazily round the waist of the whole earth.

But if in Scarpetta's theatre, drama and actors are the real thing, they are the lowest real thing.

So I took my way the next morning to Pompeii

where, as I said, I was sure of meeting my two friends, the brothers Vettii.

Men of genius are real: through them all things become real. The highest impossibility comes down from Heaven to them and the lowest fact comes up from Hell to them. They stand upon level ground.

They stand in a circle of strange phantoms become realities. And when I arrived at the house of the Vettii and had washed and rested myself, I became aware of the strange and wonderful company which Scarpetta had sent me to seek.

His introduction was not to actors, nor to the director of the little Comic Theatre, nor to the poet of the larger Tragic Theatre —— nor even to the celebrated Roman dancer who is just now residing in Pompeii and about whose performance in the Dancing Court all Pompeii is talking. I saw her driving in the narrow streets, and everybody turned to look at her as at something extraordinary. Even the barbers and chariot drivers stopped at their work a moment to look at this "celebrity."

But it was to see none of these that Scarpetta, the Neapolitan improvisor, beckoned me to go. And this is so like him, the unwashed actor from his grimy stage. As a worm, on the mud-edge of some far off and forgotten lake, by instinct true and everlasting, and with unerring knowledge of what is perfect, lifts his body slowly to

some twig and, crawling up towards the sun, hangs suspended, trusting in what is to come, and in the end throws out feeling wings of loveliness and with them floats off into heaven and elsewhere, so the unwashed actor beckoned me, with just such an indication of the direction I should take. And, as I walked along the side street past the House of the Faun, a large and finely silvered dragon-fly winged its way ahead of me, turned to the right, then to the left, and at last settled upon the pilaster on which was an inscription —— "The House of the Vettii."

Strange as it may seem, it was not without apprehension that I entered the open door of their house.

One or two things which I had noticed on my way through the streets of Pompeii made me ask myself more than once as I walked rapidly along, "Shall I find them in?" I know of no greater disspiritment, when one is happy and full of expectation, one's eyes and tongue held back by dread and almost outrunning one in their eagerness to see and speak, than to find an empty house and the people saying that they have no idea when the master will return.

And this I felt more and more keenly at every step of the way. There were quite a number of queer signs —— and at times I had difficulty in telling myself that some catastrophe had not suddenly descended upon my friends —— nay, upon the whole city.

One gets these hallucinations at times; the sight of a heap of bricks or a crumbling wall will put one in mind of an earthquake; one ruined house is enough to bring up the ghastly suggestion of an eruption and subsequent disaster. And it must have been something of the kind which put the fear into me as I hurried up the delightful little by-street which is on one side of the House of the Labyrinth.

But everything became once more normal as I entered the courtyard of their house and found my two friends waiting for me there with outstretched arms, and the same gloriously tuned voices welcomed me over and over again in words which were never turned twice the same, and which refreshed the ear and the soul and even the body, so tired through its late exertions.

I had never met them before, but it was as though I knew them very well. Therefore try and accept it that we are old friends——as indeed we were.

In height the elder of the two a little exceeds his brother, but both are tall, both fair, and have the most steady carriage.

As a well-ordered actor seems neither to move, to come on to the stage nor leave it, but comes and goes as by magic, so these brothers seemed to pass from room to room.

Trelawny writing of Shelley mentions this peculiarity. He tells us that while a group of people were in eager conversation, Shelley would

appear as from nowhere, and later would vanish just as mysteriously.

This, together with their voices, is the most striking thing about my two Vettii.

Their house is most magnificent. Small and perfectly proportioned, it contains a number of perfect little rooms, one leading out of the other, decorated and furnished so that they lead *into* one another.

This is no house of ascetics, and yet there is not a spiritless spot to be found in it. The walls are rich in colour, and the tables are covered with all manner of delicate objects for daily use. I found a little banquet awaiting me, and we were soon spread out on our couches in the coolest of rooms, eating and drinking a number of good things —— which might have come all the way from Egypt or Ceylon, so various they were and so strange to my experience.

And as we made an end of the *pranzo*, a number of young women passed by the open door and towards the atrium, and there commenced to play at a game which is certainly unusual, for it was neither noisy nor calling for exertion of any kind, and displays the hands and arms and head of the player to perfect advantage; *queenly* is the word to express their mood — queens at play.

Each of these young women seemed to me to be possessed of an amiable and distinguished bearing, the result of careful training. The mothers of the district are women of charm

and character. Neither could I detect any spiritual disharmony among them after I had questioned them for quite a while.

We now retired each to rooms containing a cool bath, to rest upon couches of cool silken texture, for the heat of the day was increasing. Each of us was accompanied by one or more of the young women. The one who joined me seemed impelled to seek my society from some profound cause and as though she had something which she desired to speak with me about.

I found later that my surmise proved to be quite exact and derived from her both instruction and illumination.

She explained to me the meaning of the game which she and her companions were playing in the atrium, and this led us into paths which led finally into "The labyrinth", that Cretan story of Ariadne and the aid she gave to Theseus.

At four o'clock I was awakened by the sound of wind instruments, played afar off; the movement floated fitfully into the stillness of my room, reminding me of I know not what depths and immensities, and filling me with a sense of happiness which I cannot describe.

I lay between waking and sleep for the space of twelve minutes, and was entering a second dream when sleep was entirely and willingly banished at a sudden burst of sound outside my door — four voices singing briskly — like an April shower.

I rose up and in five minutes I was in the peristyle, where I found my two friends already in serious discussion.

The subject which they had chosen to debate was whether animals were possessed of souls, and whether these souls, in entering the bodies of animals, were being punished or rewarded for a past existence.

In the earnestness of the dispute nothing discordant ever threatened to enter, and in twenty minutes a point of agreement had been reached, and we were all on our way to the Tragic Theatre. My friends had promised to call on the way at the House of the Poet, and, while waiting in the courtyard for his appearance, my thoughts turned towards Dublin and the house of that other poet of the other great land; of his couple of rooms, rather. Here a whole house dedicated itself to the service of the Tragic Poet.

In the entrance hall of his dwelling many works of art were to be seen, very fine things, very freely drawn and coloured, mystic each one —— one heard voices upon looking at them. The figures seemed to move slightly, beckoned or turned away —— each had one movement apiece.

We arrived at the theatre when it was just time for the piece to begin, and we took our seats — the last of all the spectators.

A noisy hubbub —— a hum —— a buzz —— then silence.

At once the Chorus sprang, fully armed, as it

seemed, into the semicircular arena. They were at work with their prelude at once. The place seemed suddenly alive; the air tingled with life. Oh, Scarpetta, what you showed me last night was good, very good, but what I see now is great, very great.

Is it possible I am in a Dead City? No, that was only an idea which rose up after some distant peal of thunder had rolled away. A storm is over there, somewhere over behind the volcano. It is far off; the sky is leaden-coloured over there. Here the silence is acute, the sun very white and the promise of a calm evening certain. But perhaps the night will bear strange things into the city. I have a presentiment of disaster.

The spectators are in a noble mood, and the performers hum like a kettle which boils upon a steady fire.

There is practically no movement at all except in the swift and regular suggestion of advancing motion in the voices of the actors.

The impression carries hallucination. With this advancing motion of the voices I receive an impression of an increase in the stature of the actors. They seem to be coming nearer and nearer; like those shadow-pictures the forms grow steadily larger and larger, and now they seem to tower to a toppling condition. Now the whole thing hangs as it were suspended. There is a long silence; one can count slowly up to twelve.

Suddenly there is a roar as of a multitude

which cries out in one voice as at some universal rescue. It comes not from the throats of the spectators, but from and in our hearts. We make no noise at all.

The drama has ended.

No one moves; every one has been leaning forward; some begin to relax and to lean back in their seats; no one wishes to rise up. There is time now. I too feel this sense of infinite time. I rest and let my eyes wander along the noble lines of the stage, and the calm sky which shows above the cornices. A bell near by strikes out its quite small note; afar off another bell begins to toll —— a third —— others. The sun seems to be sinking rapidly now, and yet no one stirs. No one would wish to stir even by the least ripple this great ocean which is in us and yet upon which we too float.

I feel that this is the great blessing brought to us here by the poet —— the value of the moments.

It is dusk now, and no one can see anything distinctly. Up above, the sun throws a last red streak upon the long cornice. We are quite in the shadow. A long time seems to elapse.

Now every one will be rising and leaving the building without haste and without noise. To speak would be to break perfection. Everything is right. The great theatre has emptied itself as in one great heaving sigh. Oh, but this is good —— very good.

The moon is up. Alone in the empty theatre,

sitting there long after the city is asleep, I know as by a magical divination the little secret which has bred this great impression.

Not Art, not greater knowledge, nor any power of God —— only the liberty of the nature of man has made it possible.

He is free to open his nature, to expand. He may see, hear, touch and know by his senses the simple mysteries of his existence.

I saw it when I was in the House of the Vettii. I felt it at each hour there, and at every event, great or small. I felt it in the House of the Tragic Poet. I felt it in the theatre. The performance only reminded me that this was a reality. Freedom was no dream here; it was an actuality — present — precious. Those pleasures called profane and those called sacred were here fused; to one and all they were the very essence of Life. There was no actual slavery here; even the slaves made duty a joy.

Freedom of thought and experience was the Law. Men dared to be profane, for men dared to be profound. There was no vulgarity, I remembered, in the lewd painting which I saw in the House of the Vettii.

Revelation seemed full as I sat and pondered upon all this at midnight in the Tragic Theatre. And I drew my cloak round my knees and shoulders and lay down on the still warm steps —— and fell asleep.

POMPEII, 1914.

CHURCH AND STAGE: IN ROME

"*When in Rome do as the Romans do.*"

I DID, and I didn't.

I did as the Romans do. I went to the theatre and laughed like a Roman. I drank in new life and became, as Romans do, intoxicated with good things.

Then I did what Romans don't seem to do.

THE CHURCH

I went to Santa Maria Maggiore, a large and perhaps beautiful church. I went there convinced that I should have to elbow my way in; it was at Vespers on New Year's Day.

I arrived early, at a quarter to three, and at three-fifteen the service began. Hardly a Roman in the place. One or two foreigners. I saw that modern Romans do not understand any more dignity and beauty in ceremony and music, yet I waited breathlessly, as I wait always before the Matthew "Passion" of John Sebastian Bach.

The ceremony began. The music came. The ceremony ended. The music went. But neither one nor the other touched me; they gave me

nothing, there was no crowd — eager — ecstatic — being swayed by a great ceremony. There was a feeling that it was all being hurried over.

As an artist I am always open to impressions, and where an organ, a choir of voices and a ceremony work in harmony, I am always alert and ready to enjoy.

The whole service that afternoon at three-fifteen in Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, was exceedingly bad, so bad that it is open to censure.

Nothing leads me to suppose that the performance of the ceremony was worse than usual, yet I was unusually disappointed. I had been prepared for something lovely. Hoping for the best I waited on, thinking to hear the music played and sung in perfect fashion. Neither was even adequate.

Once, while travelling in the Apennines, I had a long conversation with a priest. He was on his way to Rome.

Not having at that time seen any Italian city but Florence and Milan, I was curious to hear of the capital of Italy. I supposed Rome was a noble city. He answered me that it was.

I then spoke of the difficulty I had in being a "believer" in the sense the Catholic uses the word. I said I had tried hard, but the Church was always preventing me by force from loving the Church.[1]

[1] I need hardly say to my dear reader that as I am an artist by birth — if you deny me achievement — I believe everything and

"How is that?" he asked.

"Well, you see, I am such a wretched being —— I am an artist. I love so much *beautiful* things. I love the beauty of white clouds (I pointed to them) and the little hills of Italy —— the beauty of the mystery of the singing of birds, and the noises of a brook (I called on him to listen to them, then and there). Yes, and even the beauty of the heart and of the mind. I dislike so much the ugliness and tyranny of stations and the noises of trains, the blackness and the hard suggestion of cities. And I cannot tell how it is, but whenever I enter the grand old churches of Italy, I am there forced to feel that they are places of terror. The effect works slowly, but it always drives me out sooner than I had hoped to go." He was a good man, this priest. I looked at him sideways; he had not changed his patient expression, I seemed invited to proceed.

"In Florence, in Milan," I went on, "and in some smaller towns, I have gone with reverence and in search of spiritual beauty into many churches. What did I find in every case? I hardly dare tell you."

"Tell me," he answered, for he was a good and patient priest — this father.

"No, I cannot tell you what I saw and heard. But I must ask you to tell me why the Church

will disbelieve nothing, bearing towards the religious belief of the late Sir Anthony Ashley Cooper and Mr. Waldenshare, who held that all sensible men were of the same religion. "Pray what is that?" asks a curious one. "Sensible men never tell," they answer.

orders many of its priests to strive to make their faces and figures more ugly than is necessary? I must ask you to explain why some of the priests are told to talk amongst themselves, and point to and laugh about men and women who come in to look and listen with reverence? These are things which puzzle me much; but what puzzles me most is to understand why the Church insists so rigorously upon a few of its priests grinding out the most ugly sounds which the human voice is capable of producing, and all the while making grimaces such as are only equalled for ugliness by the Chinese evil spirits, as depicted by the great artists of the East? If I could only understand the profound intention of the Church and its insistence upon these daily creations of ugliness, I could the better believe in this Church and admire its influence."

"Ah," sighed my friend, "you should go to Rome. There the music is quite lovely."

So I came. I have listened and looked, and it is as ugly and as dead as anything I have ever encountered. Please understand me that I speak only of the semblance of the thing, not of its inner life. I know nothing of that inner life. How can I? It is hidden —— there is no way of ascertaining. I am forcibly prevented from getting further than the externals, and these externals are, I repeat, the ugliest, blackest, most hopeless which man ever encountered.

And perhaps this is a reason why Romans were

not to be found at Santa Maria Maggiore on New Year's Day at Vespers.

I am told that the place is practically empty the whole year round. I am sorry, but I am not surprised, and am forced to think it is a very good old saying about doing as the Romans do in Rome.

THE STAGE

For they do go to the theatre —— they went to laugh with each other and with the actor Scarpetta, and hang me if I don't believe in my heart of hearts that a side-splitting performance by Scarpetta is a more elevating and more religious exhibition than that service as it is held to-day at Santa Maria Maggiore.

I don't question that the Church service aims at Divine worship. I can only state that it fails utterly to hit the mark, for it fails to be heard or seen, and therefore to be felt, and that is essential if you wish to move the people. And those not Catholics who do hear and see it are terrified, if their eyes and ears are expecting to receive the signs of spiritual beauty.

Whereas we all of us came into touch with Scarpetta at the theatre, we all of us saw and heard things and were moved to feel things; at the theatre doubts and theories vanished, false hopes and equally false delusions vanished —— we were face to face with life. Nobody was mewing and nobody was barking. People were

speaking —— human people. They were telling us nothing new, nothing mysterious —— I mean to say nothing so mysterious that it was incomprehensible. We just heard once more the same old story with the moral (if you want a moral) of the power of gay spirits over the weakness of tears and complaints.

Many comedies, it is true, are charged with the spirit of mockery. These comedies in Rome had an ounce of it, but only an ounce; the rest was pure mischief and fun and poetry; little "tragedy" in the strict sense of the word, but much more tragedy than you would get in a Classic Theatre in Paris, Berlin, or London. For after all, an old gentleman with a very red nose is not only comic, but has a touch of tragedy in him, especially when that nose is wedded to a pair of extremely grave eyes and brows, and a reserved play of the hands.

The mockery of life was mainly in the gait of the actors, and there was nothing but charm or comedy in their delivery. Now and then one or two of the actors in the secondary rôles exaggerated a trifle, and by trying to force the humour of the situation or the character became, I regret to say, almost like the priests in Santa Maria Maggiore. But this was never the case with the first five or six of the actors, who were quite delightful.

Reader, I am afraid that when you come to Rome you won't be able to do as the Romans did, for I think that Scarpetta will be in Naples,

Syracuse, or some other fair city. For Scarpetta comes from Naples; so when you go to Rome —— well, I think you had better do as the Neapolitans do.

LONDON, 1913.

REARRANGEMENTS

I LOVE the Theatre——no matter what can be said against it, I love it. No matter what proofs can be found to establish its inferiority, I love it.

It does not seem to you that it is an inferior thing, our Theatre? Bravo! Nor to me! It does to some people, though: and as it seems so to these others, and they are of some account, let us before going further see who they are and what they say.

The door opens, and in troops a number of distinguished persons. We recognize them immediately——St. Augustine, St. Chrysostom, St. Cyril, De Goncourt, Flaubert, Goethe, Lamb, Nietzsche, Plato, Ruskin, Schürer, Tchekov, Tertullian.

Heavens! what a formidable troop!

And what is it they say? Well, they say so much and say it so well that to print it here with my text would be wrong——because unfortunately I agree with much that they say——so I will reprint their compliments at the end of the volume as a discreet appendix.[1] If they want to

[1] See Appendix A.

throw abuses at us let them do so from the mat outside the hall door.

Their judgment of us can be summed up in a word —— "Inferior." The Theatre *is* inferior.

Now, it may send some of our family into a rage to hear such a judgment pronounced. I got over that rage when I was twenty-five. I got over it in this way: I allowed myself time to consider. I left the theatre for a while so as to get time and quiet to think it all over. I stood back from it as from a broadly-painted picture, to get a right view of it.

Then down I went into an Inferno —— stayed there —— and after some years came up again very much altered, quite surely determined that what I had suffered by *realization* should not be wasted.

I had paid the price and I determined to claim the privilege. I still claim that privilege.

The privilege I claim is to be acknowledged to have seen the truth regarding the Theatre —— the very unpleasant truth —— and not to have altered in my respect and admiration for the Theatre by one iota, one breath, and to be acknowledged as fit for my task of putting it once more in order.

Have I mocked at it? Hoity-toity! I am not one of those with whom all is over the moment they can mock at a thing. If I have mocked at it I tell you I love it, and my mockery amounts to no more than a jerk at the reins which my old

horse Minnie understands to mean, "Hurry up, or the donkey-carts will be passing us!"

Eccola! I love the Theatre.

That said, I intend not to rest from searching far and wide to discover all its weaknesses; for to me its virility has long ago been established. Once its weaknesses are made plain we can do with them what we will——can destroy, strengthen, develop——but nothing is gained by refusing to face the facts concerning the condition of our theatre.

Like all phenomena it has several primary and a quantity of subdivisions. Two of these subdivisions we are accustomed to call material and spiritual, or the practical and the ideal.

Its organization and its art are alike dependent on our perception and application of both these qualities; they should go hand in hand in every branch of the Theatrical Art and Organization, even as in life they are fitted to go hand in hand, with advantage.

Enquiring into these results we find that the body of the modern Theatre is composed of strangely contradictory elements; of the organic and of the inorganic hopelessly clinging together.

Regard for a moment this bunch of confusion; regard that side where all the stage conventions and inventions are clustered.

We find:

1. On the poet's part, an unnatural mode of speech——verse or prose.

2. On the actor's part, a natural, even colloquial mode of utterance.
3. Scenes imitating nature in paint and canvas.
4. Actors of flesh and blood.
5. Movements half natural, half artificial.
6. Light always failing in an attempt to simulate Nature's light.
7. The faces painted and disguised.
8. The facial expression always attempting to come through the paint and disguise.

Thus 1, 2, 4 and 8 —— the words, actors, their speech and facial expression are organic.

3 and 7 —— the scenes, and disguised faces are inorganic.

5 and 6 —— the light and movement are half one thing and half the other.

It is with this material that the modern Theatre fatuously believes it can fashion a work of art. And it is against this material that the nature of all art rebels and prevails.

Let us rearrange and change parts of this conglomeration and then see whether things are not more of a piece. And against those items which we rearrange or change we will place a sign (§) so that it will be seen at a glance.

1. The poet's work to be as it is —— an unnatural mode of speech, or verse.

§ 2. The actor's work to be an unnatural mode of delivery.

§ 3. The scene to be a non-natural invention, timeless and of no locality.

§ 4. Actors to be disguised beyond recognition, like the marionette.

§ 5. Movements conventionalised according to some system.

§ 6. Light frankly non-natural, disposed so as to illumine scene and actors.

§ 7. Masks.

§ 8. Expression to be dependent on the masks and the conventional movements, both of which are dependent on the skill of the actor.

Now we find that without having to eliminate any one of the eight factors, we have been able to harmonize their conflicting purposes by altering some of them.

But let us once again rearrange the parts so that they harmonize in another key.

§ 1. The poet's work to be written in a colloquial mode of speech, natural—as improvisation is.

2. The actor's delivery to be colloquial.

§ 3. The scene to be a facsimile or photographic reproduction of nature, even to the use of real trees, real earth, bricks, etc.

4. The actors in no way disguised, but selected according to their likeness to the part which is to be acted.

5. Movements as natural as the speech.

6. The light of day or night.

7. The faces of the actors paintless.

8. The expression as natural as the movements and speech.

Now either of these two rearrangements is logical in itself, even as it would be logical to place a real chrysanthemum in a real glass vase with real water in it, or an imitation flower in a papier-maché vase painted to look as though it held water.

In short, to mix the real and the unreal, the genuine and the sham —— *when you are not forced to do so* —— is at all times, whether in Life or in Art, an error, a misconception of the nature of all things, a parody of purpose.

The next question therefore seems to be, which is the best of the two logical rearrangements?

"Best" is often a matter of opinion, and always so where the decision is unhampered by tradition. Tradition also is fallible, yet where we benefit greatly by following a tradition, should we not do unwisely to depart from it?

Thus, I hardly think that in the case of shipbuilding we should break through the old tradition of putting a keel to our ships, nor even skirt round the tradition by making the keels of leather. Yet doubtless some who have an exaggerated regard for their own opinion in face of expert opinion will stick to it that leather keels are best when the other parts of a ship are made of iron or steel —— for "there is nothing like leather."

Therefore I cannot help feeling that since, for

ages and not merely centuries, all art experts —— that is to say, artists and art theorists too —— have decided that, no matter what the work is to be, if it is to be called an art work it must be made solely from *inorganic* material, the first rearrangement that I have suggested is *nearer* the desired state than is the second; not perfect, but at least nearer.

I am aware that in the first rearrangement there are some suggestions which will strike you as uncommon. Let me assure you that they are really not at all new, if rather unfamiliar to us. If they *appear* strange it is because they have been for a long time disregarded and are in disuse.

But we find that even in Poetry, in Music and in Architecture an old rhythm or scale which has been long forgotten is found agreeable by the artist who, when he employs it, startles his audience a little. They think it is his invention, unaware that it has a tradition of centuries to commend its use.

I would propose, therefore, that we familiarize ourselves and our assistants with these seemingly new suggestions until we realize their *value;* and that where, by the addition and application of one or more of these suggestions we can increase the value of the whole Art of the Theatre, we should not be held up by an over-sensitive lack of confidence in our power to apply them, or by lack of faith in the power of the spectators to accept them.

This is one method of advancing our institution to a position which may influence the distinguished traducers of our work to reconsider their verdict that the Art of the Theatre is an *inferior* art.

FLORENCE, 1915.

THOROUGHNESS IN THE THEATRE

One Way to Get It

A Chorus of Voices: Welcome! We *are* so pleased to see you!

1st Voice: Now I will tell you what you ought to do.

2nd Voice: Now I will tell you what *I* think you ought to do.

3rd Voice: I am sure you ought to ——

4th Voice: Now I will tell you what we will arrange ——

Myself: Gentlemen, may I submit to you *my* plan?

IN 1900 I had gathered together a certain number of ideas which I wished to test in the English Theatre. I managed to test some of these ideas in the one or two operas and plays that I produced from 1900 to 1903, but I found at the end of that time that a public theatre, with an audience paying for their seats, is not the right place in which to test ideas, even although the bad habit is popular with some managers. I then had thoughts of establishing what I called a "School of Theatrical Art." I spoke about

this to a few people, but at that time they did not seem to think I had sufficiently proved my right to possess ideas nor to spread them. So I went away to Germany and travelled on to Italy and Russia, and the Germans and the Russians made use of my ideas, testing them, alas, as I had done, hastily, in a public theatre and before crowded audiences. I am told that they even took the results of some of these experiments to England and America. And I am told that the public raved about them. I am very pleased to hear it.

May I now be permitted to suggest something to my friends that is a little more practical than this hasty way of experimenting before the public?

I intend to suggest nothing complicated. My proposal is this: That there shall be a place in which to experiment and test my ideas (not necessarily those ideas which I took to Germany and to Russia, but ideas which I have been extremely careful to protect till I should some day come to my own) and, with the place, the men who shall carry out the experiments, and, with the men, the machines and instruments necessary to their work. My proposal is made not only on behalf of the theatre as an ideal, but also for the sake of the modern theatre, which is, unfortunately, very far from the ideal. I am in love with the former; I should dearly and sincerely like to be on none but the best of terms with the latter, assisting it with the results of my experiments.

I have written blaming the modern theatre so

much that the modern theatre is perfectly justified in being very angry with me. But then I am perfectly justified in saying what I have said, because I hold a peculiar position in the theatre. I have the honour to belong to one of the oldest stage families; I have been nursed by one who created beauty in the theatre, and who has never ceased to regret the appearance of vulgarity and ugliness and pretentiousness in the theatre, and therefore, if I criticise, I am but criticising the way my own home is being conducted. This is held by some people to be an offence against all things sacred to the theatre. I claim that it is those sacred things which have already been offended against.

But I am quite willing that all argument about this matter shall cease, when I am in a position to prove, by the tests that I speak of above, that there are at least a hundred and one ways of improving the theatre, all of which are possible, not impossible.

I wish for a school, or let us call it a theatre, of experiment. I wish for men to carry out with me the experiments, and I wish the results of the tests to be offered immediately to any modern European or American theatre that wishes to make use of them. (It is understood, of course, that our experiments would be made in private.)

Let us inquire into how and why my experimental theatre might be of immediate use to the modern stage.

It might be that a manager intends to produce a play by Shakespeare. He has his own ideas about the production, and his ideas are very often beyond the understanding of even his own staff. It is really often very difficult for a manager to convey to his staff the exact meaning of what is in his head. He may think he has suggested something to them that is quite clear, and it may appear quite vague to them. For instance, supposing he were to say, "Oh, I wish for a scene that is like this," and he moves his right hand; or, "I want a scene like that," and he moves his left hand; it is reasonable to suppose that the ordinary staff of a theatre would find it very difficult to follow his meaning, although to him it seems quite clear. Such a manager can hardly read to his staff the lines of the play and then explain to them all that those lines suggest to him, because were he to do so they would be even more in the dark. The staff of a theatre seldom have the opportunity of exercising their understanding of poetry.

How then can they carry out the subtle desires of such a manager? In despair, he is forced to turn to one of his many scrap books and, taking from it some newspaper illustration, is obliged to ask his staff to do "something like that."

To save this trouble and to put an end to this confusion, such an experimental school as I suggest would exist. The manager would say to the school committee, "I intend to produce 'Hamlet.'

Will you please submit to me original and beautiful scenes for the play, made to scale, showing me the colours of the costumes grouped in the different scenes, lighted in some beautiful and not entirely old-fashioned manner; and will you kindly show me how I can carry that out practically at such and such a cost. At the same time, please bear in mind that the appearance of the ghost of Hamlet's father has always been a trifle ridiculous. Can you suggest to me an original and yet practical plan for restoring his grandeur and mystery?"

And the necessary arrangements having been made, the school, at a fixed date, would submit the *mise-en-scène* of this or of any production in all its details, and would demonstrate on its experimental stage all that needed proving.

This that I have said may apply, of course, to some moderately ordinary production, given by a conventional manager at some popular West End theatre.

Now let us take the case of a manager who adventures further than the one above, who wishes to attempt newer things. I can take a very good case in proof — that of Mr. Martin Harvey. Had such a school as I suggest been in existence when he wished to produce Sophocles' "Œdipus" at Covent Garden, Mr. Harvey would not have been obliged to call in the assistance of the German director, Professor Max Reinhardt, but, after a few conferences with our English school

committee, he would have found he could obtain from us all he wished for.

Mr. Harvey in 1911 altered Covent Garden. He removed the stalls, he turned it into a kind of Greek theatre, and the piece was lighted in a way, if not familiar to all, quite familiar to me. It was dressed differently from the usual productions, the movements were different from what we are used to, and all this was done by Mr. Martin Harvey *because Professor Max Reinhardt had been enabled by his countrymen to test English ideas in Berlin.*

Is it unreasonable for me to say that we in England should have had the privilege of testing those ideas of ours at home, and that we should not have had to wait two or three years before they were tested in Germany and then *brought* here by foreigners? It is not unreasonable for me to hope and expect more advanced countries to do as I ask.

I want schools or theatres of experiment in which to make these tests: one school to begin with and others later.

But it is not solely for the two classes of production mentioned that I wish this school to be established. It is not wise to consider merely to-day: we must look a little ahead. To-morrow and the day after to-morrow are really not bad points on which to keep our eyes.

I was told, on my return to England in 1911, that, by the patriotism and good offices of the

Honourable Mrs. Lyttelton and Sir Carl and Lady Meyer, the National Theatre scheme was no longer a wild and hare-brained idea, but had come nearer the point of practical politics. I was told that Sir Carl and Lady Meyer had given seventy thousand pounds to advance this scheme, England subscribing ten thousand pounds, and that this ten thousand pounds was then speculated with — and lost.

And what I asked at the time was whether any provision had been made for filling that theatre with good things after it had been erected. I was not speaking of the actors and actresses, for there were and are many fine English actors and actresses. I was not speaking of the drama, because we English and Americans have a great drama —— the greatest in the world —— the Shakespearean. But I was thinking of the ideas which surround the drama and are of service to the actors; and of these ideas I saw no signs anywhere. I still do not see them.

I ask once more for a place in America in which ideas can be tested, so that there will always be a store of ideas, practically tested and found reliable, with which to embellish our great Shakespearean drama, a drama which we English willingly share with our American cousins, who will perhaps agree with us that even if *translated* into the German tongue it can never be the German drama, and is then but the "reverse of our tapestry."

I have so far only spoken of three good reasons for establishing the proposed school of experiment. I have very many more reasons which I will place before some of you in due time. But I have one more good reason to give to the public. It is that the theatres are losing money.

THE SCHOOL

In talking about a School of Experiment for an art such as the one I propose now, it will be best to avoid technical details as much as possible. How little illuminating would be a long description of the means we shall employ in our experiments with light and the scene! How little it would say to you if I described what we shall practise with the voice! And how little you would be moved if I were to tell you how we are to study the movements of Nature!

All this would be more or less asking you to fix your attention upon something on the table, some book or plan or chart. Instead of that, let us walk through the school. By seeing something of it you will understand far better.

Let us imagine that we are standing in the central hall of the building; you look up, and seem surprised at the loftiness of it, with light coming in from high windows. Already you do not feel as if you were in a school. You ask what use is made of this room, and I point to one end of it. There you see a large stage upon which the

masters and assistants are trying experiments with a new apparatus which we made last week, for the purpose of casting a series of parallel shafts of light, each of which has parallel edges —— a most difficult yet a most desirable thing to do, I assure you.

"But why are all those figures dressed in white, and why is the scene white?"

"Well, we are interested for the moment in seeing how much colour is to be found in the use of white light upon white objects."

"And do you find any?"

"Oh, yes, quite a little."

"I like a lot of colour. I saw such a blaze of colour when the Russian Ballet came here. Do you not like the Russian Ballet and their stage setting?"

"Yes, quite well. But to give you that we should need to make no experiments. We should simply buy some colours and then ask a number of studio painters to give us a few months of their valuable time to do our work for us. That is not exactly what we purpose doing here. The whole reason of this school is that we may train *the men of the theatre* to be able to do their own work for themselves —— not to call in the outsider. It seems to me rather a reasonable proposition, and it seems to me utterly unreasonable for a serious institution like the theatre to seem obliged to call in outsiders, however talented they may be, in order to help us out of our difficulties.

What the stage has never yet learned to do, is to surmount its own difficulties.

"*I want to see the theatre entirely self-dependent. As it is, when it wants colour, designs, costumes and lighting effects, it goes to artists who know nothing about the theatre, they having practised the art of painting, which is a totally different art.*

"I do not believe that I am the only person in the theatre who thinks like this. And, therefore, I believe that this school, when it opens and gets to work, will be very often visited by our theatrical friends."

"Oh, I like *that!*"

This exclamation is caused by my visitor suddenly being carried away by something she sees upon the stage. She claps her hands, and says she "has never seen anything so lovely before."

"I am so pleased. That is the second reason why we made this school. *It was to give you and every one else all sorts of things that you had never seen before, and to give you pleasure through them.*"

"Yes, but it is wonderful! All that light pouring up like a torrent in great waves. How exciting!"

"Yes. That is the third reason; to excite you. Why, the school seems to be quite a success in the first five minutes!"

"Yes, but tell me what it is for."

"It is *for* nothing in particular. It is for the

sake of the experiment; it is in order to find out, and know more than others. And we come across such things every day when making our experiments."

"Yes, but can't you put it to some use, so that every one can see it?"

"Do you think people would like to see it?"

"Why, there is nobody who would not be excited if they saw such a thing as that upon the stage."

"Well, then, perhaps sooner or later we shall find some manager who will want such things —— some manager who wants to excite his audience. After all, exciting impressions in a theatre are rare enough nowadays, but one must not force them on to the stage or they are out of place."

"Now do tell me how you discover things like that!"

"The reason is that we have *time* in which to discover them. That is the first requisite. Then we have the place. That is the second. And we have the idea. That is the third. Then, with unlimited material to use, we merely work away until we find it out. If we had to try and create any such impression in a theatre we should not be able to do so, because we have not the time there to devote to such a search, nor the material, and because we have to produce plays by, let us say, March first, or July fifth, at a given hour, and we are under contract to do so."

"But are there not workshops all over London,

where they have time and where their whole year's work consists in making experiments in their own branches? Are there not theatrical electricians, theatrical scene painters, theatrical costumers, and do they do nothing?"

"Oh, certainly; they do wonders. These suppliers of 'effects' to the theatres are possibly the most capable of men. The scene painters are undoubtedly the most admirable scene painters, and what costumers we have! And the electricians are first class.

"But what is the use of considering all these things *separately,* or of separate people supplying them to the theatres, since they have to be judged as a whole when united? You may paint the most perfect scene in the world, and you may bring in the most perfect lighting apparatus in the theatre, but, *unless the two things, together with the actor and the actor's voice,* have been considered as a unit, the most dire results must always be produced.

"Now that is what always happens in a theatre to-day. In the old days there was a better chance of unity, even if scene painters and costumers were less archæologically correct, and though the lighting apparatus was inferior in make and capabilities.

"In those days the scenes, costumes and lighting effects were all made by people in the particular theatre in which they had to be seen. And, until something of this kind is done again in the

theatre, we shall never quite get on to the best that can be done.

"Now let us go into another room and see the models for the production of 'The Tempest', and also those for the production of 'The Importance of Being Earnest.'"

My visitor runs quickly ahead of me with awakened enthusiasm. We find there large models, made to scale and perfect in every detail, of every one of the eight necessary scenes for "The Tempest." Each scene is on a separate stand which raises it to the level of the eyes. At the side of each stand is a table on which is a small model of every character appearing in that special scene, each in his costume (or, if two or more costumes are needed for one character, then there are two or more copies of the figure).

All these figures are carved in wood or modelled in wax, and not merely toy things cut out of paper. The whole cut and fit of the costume and its full effect is apparent.

By turning a switch the scene is illuminated exactly as it will be illuminated on the larger stage. Two of the assistants now group the figures on the stage, while a third reads aloud the text of the play. We thus witness an exact demonstration of the performance from the rise of the curtain to its fall, minus the inspiration, or talent, of the actor. That, of course, is the thing which can either make or mar the performance.

But while this is true, it is no less true that the very best actors cannot hold up the weight of a great play like "The Tempest" if they are surrounded by what is called "noisy" scenery, by restless lighting or costumes, and if the stage manager has not understood and explained to his staff and performers the meaning of the play and the whole effect of the production. This meaning of the play is one of the things so often forgotten. A company of good actors may interpret certain passages of the play admirably, but the whole meaning and the whole impression of the play is often lost.

"But would you always produce 'The Tempest' like this, with these eight scenes?" asks my visitor.

"By no means, Madam, and you have only to turn your head, and you will see another eight models, another set of figures, and another method of lighting; and if you care to wait, we will show you each of the situations you have just seen, only *interpreted* quite differently. We have no hard and fast rules in our experiments. We believe that 'The Tempest' can be produced in ten or even twenty different ways, and that each interpretation can be right.

"But there is one way that we do not trouble about; it is that way which pleases the groundlings, by whom we by no means allude to those people who go to the pit. We are thinking of that vulgar and useless clique who seldom pay

for their seats, and who generally do their best to decry anything that is at all intelligent, and laud to the skies that which is foolish.

"If you will come over here, I will show you models for the production of 'The Importance of Being Earnest.' You will see that the scene is very artificial, just as the play is artificial.

"This first scene is the interior of a bachelor's apartments; but it is more than that; it is such an apartment seen through the temperament of Wilde. Any jackass can *reproduce* one of the rooms in a West End flat, but it takes an artist ——yes, it really takes an artist——to imagine and invent the apartment which Wilde imagined."

"But what about the study of acting?"

"My dear Madam, do you suppose that we should attempt to teach that which every one has told us is unteachable? Miss Ellen Terry has said that acting is not to be taught, and many others have said so too, and we are entirely of their opinion. It cannot be taught.

"But what *can* be taught is this; how to walk from one side of the stage to the other; but that is moving——that is not acting. You can be taught how to move arms, legs and torso with expression; that is not acting——that again is moving. You can be taught how to move your face; you can even be taught how to move your soul——or rather, how to allow your soul to move you——but this is still not acting. That comes under the head of movement. Then you

can be taught how to produce your voice so that it reaches to every part of the building and into the soul of the listener. You can be taught how not to speak; but all this is not acting, it is speaking.

"In fact, this school does not attempt to teach as you teach parrots. It attempts to give men the necessary equipment to produce a play from first to last. I have, for instance, designed scenes all my life, but I have never been *taught* that. But I remember well there was a time in my life when I would have given much if I could have been shown how to do that which should lead to the producing of a play, that which should lead to the designing of scenes and that which should lead to the acting of a part.

"It is just for this reason that I call this a 'School of Experiment.' When you experiment, you find out for yourself. At any other school you become like a parrot, and you imitate. The faculty for imitation is not what I want my school to develop —— it is to develop the creative faculty. If you study how to copy accounts, how to write shorthand, how to make bricks, or any other work requiring diligent application only, you can be taught by careful directors; but if you attempt to teach even so delicate an art as that of cooking, neither careful direction nor diligent application will achieve anything.

"This idea nowadays that all tasks undertaken can be likened to one another leads to confusion in the minds of workers in every branch. There are

the workers with the hands, workers with the head, and workers with the soul; and the qualities of these three tasks are as separate as are the earth, the sea and the sky from one another. That which your hand learns, you can be taught; that which your head learns, you can only teach yourself; and that which your soul learns, is God-sent.

"This school is to teach that which the hand can learn, and to experiment with the hand; it is also to make it possible for us to teach ourselves those things which the head can learn; and if we happen to have among our members one or more of those elect people who the Gods have taken the thought to teach, then so much the better.

"We may by good fortune do inspired work ——but good or ill fortune, all our work shall be *thorough*."

LONDON, 1911.

ON LEARNING MAGIC

A Dialogue Many Times Repeated

"The most foolish error of all is made by clever young men in thinking that they forfeit their originality if they recognize a truth which has already been recognized by others."

GOETHE.

PUPIL. I want to join your school and to study the Art of the Theatre.

MASTER. Let me do my best to point out to you the hardships connected with the study of the Art.

You have to give up every other study and think only of this one.

You have to begin from the beginning.

You have to come to me knowing nothing, and, what is more, realizing that you know nothing.

You have to be prepared to work ten to fifteen years at the Art.

You have to feel discontented with yourself and not with me.

You have to realize that before you can create a drama you must be able to speak so as to be heard, walk across a room or a stage with ease, have studied the movements of marionettes for many years, love Nature better than your own self, know the whole history of the Drama from

its earliest days, absorb all theories, be able to do humblest services —— and be an honest man.

PUPIL. Oh, I can do all this easily. I love the Idea so much, and you are such a wonderful man.

MASTER. That has nothing to do with it, and all depends upon you. Do you know what is a stage rostrum?

PUPIL. I suppose it is a raised pulpit of some kind.

MASTER. It is a raised stage of wood, composed of a collapsible framework and a moveable top. (*The Master here draws a plan of this.*) It is used in modern theatres to build up the scene with. Thus at the far end of a flight of steps we shall place a rostrum so that it may act as a landing place. Do you understand?

PUPIL. Oh, yes, of course!

MASTER. I am glad you find that easy to grasp. In "Julius Cæsar" at His Majesty's Theatre, in "Faust" at the Lyceum, and in "Tannhäuser" at Bayreuth many such rostrums were used.

PUPIL. But why do you tell me all this?

MASTER. Do you know what is a stage brace?

PUPIL. No, but what has that to do with the Art of the Theatre as hinted at in your book?

MASTER. A stage brace is a wooden support, adjustable to any reasonable height and used in the modern theatre to prop up pieces of stage scenery which are neither hung nor self-support-

ing. (*He draws a plan of the stage brace.*) Do you know what "properties" are?

PUPIL. But I want to study Art with you, not tricks.

MASTER. A great poet has told us that all Art is a trick; therefore do not despise tricks. You say you want to study Art —— and you begin by despising the humblest parts of the Art.

PUPIL. But rostrums and braces and properties are things which children of ten or twelve years old might learn about and profit by knowing.

MASTER. Whereas you are a superior person and wish to learn the Art? Let me tell you that you will never learn the Art until you are modest enough to desire to learn all about the humblest parts of the structure of theatres —— scenery, costumes, and acting —— and to learn it thoroughly. Do you really suppose that the carrying of a banner is an easy matter? Do you really believe you are so gifted a person that you can afford to skip the experience of saying, "My lord, the carriage waits?"

PUPIL. But, Master, I thought you hated all that nonsense. I thought you detested Bayreuth, the Lyceum, and His Majesty's. I thought you wrote and fought against all the old-fashioned stage for years —— that you planned out a new stage which you believed in, and which was to be the Stage of the Future.

MASTER. You see how far wrong you are in your reading of my thoughts. I have planned out

a new stage, certainly; but not because I despised or hated the old stage——because I love it, and lived near it many years.

And though I may wish to create a new stage, I know the old one; and to know is to love, even if one does not agree with it. I worked in the old theatre for more than ten years before I began to construct the new.

You wish to begin where I left off. Such vanity, such shifting of responsibilities, is no use to you.

You say you want to come to my school.

I tell you you had better keep away unless you realize that you have firstly *no right* to despise the old stage, and secondly *no chance* of practising the new Art until you have paid the very humblest tribute to the old institution, by studying all those things which at present you dare to despise.

You came here expecting me to tear up the old Theatre before your eyes. You expected to find an accomplice, and you are surprised to find a master.

When you read in my book that I was all on the side of the young men and against the managers, you thought that you would plot with me to blow them to the moon. But on coming here you hear me speaking well of the managers and advocating a thorough study of their methods. That makes you mad. And you will never be able to understand my reasons for being balanced.

I quarrelled with the managers and the con-

ditions of the stage only after having studied the theatre for over twelve years——but I quarrelled openly. I have no wish to be a conspirator.

A conspirator is a sneak. This school is not to produce sneaks.

Here with me you learn first to love the old Theatre. I hand on to you what my old master taught me, and I tell you where I think he may have erred, but I do not want your understanding to become thick and muddy by drunkenly jeering at his errors. The "errors" were far better than all your "virtues." And you will only advance and do well if you are honest, modest, and open-minded.

PUPIL. I think I have changed my opinion ——and I do not wish to come to your school; for I am not a baby and will learn to be honest and modest somewhere else.

(*He goes out, and the Master proceeds with his work, firmly convinced that the real pupil with character is never far off.*)

FLORENCE, 1913.

TUITION IN ART

A Note to the Younger Generation of Theatrical Students

NOWADAYS when masters of Theatrical Art are rare, we must learn as best we can. The managers are too busy to help us, and the actors and actresses have lost the knack of instructing. Many a student, either too poor or too intelligent to go to one of the Schools of Dramatic Art, has to be his own master; and, with care and plenty of self-criticism, he can have no more faithful tutor.

Yet there are masters willing to help the student of our Art and to do so for next to nothing; and, even if not strictly speaking dramatic tutors, these masters come very near the mark and in some respects are better than the professional teachers. I allude to the old masters of painting whose works we can study when and where we will——these works will not teach us how to be scene painters only, but how to understand all that is known by the word "dramatic."

What exactly, you ask, can we learn from these masters? I will tell you.

You can derive many wonderful things and learn many useful things; though surely no one

who looks at these works needs to be told what can be *derived* by studying them. As for *learning* from them, you can do so by studying in them movement — dramatic movement in mass and in detail — facial expression, the values of light and shadow, historical and fanciful costume and the way to wear it, and some of the significance of a pictorial or an architectural scene.

If you visit the different galleries of Europe or America continually, and if you are able to be undisturbed while studying these wonderful collections, you will receive a fuller impression than if you study reproductions in black and white; but even these can be of very great value to you, and I will tell you how to get them easily. And consider what a great advantage it will be for you to have in your own room a set of pictures full of such things as I have enumerated, for you can study so much better in private, and a public gallery cannot offer you sufficient privacy for your work.

A publisher[1] has for some years been issuing small volumes literally packed with good reproductions of all the best works of the Masters of Italy, Holland, Spain, and other countries. You can have the masterpieces of Giotto, Carpaccio, Dürer, Tintoretto, Fra Angelico, Raphael, Veronese, Holbein, Rembrandt, Velasquez, Teniers —— the list is too long to complete it here ——

[1] Gowans and Grey, Glasgow.

and you can get a volume containing sixty of these reproductions for sixpence.

And from nearly every picture there is something to be derived or learned.

This possibly never before occurred to you, but it may interest you to learn that something like this occurred to men and women in your calling whose names and works you hold in great esteem. Miss Ellen Terry, for example, owes much to the masters of painting; Forbes Robertson much; Madame Bernhardt and Madame Duse and Salvini all studied under them; Henry Irving very often turned to them, although, possibly owing to his early training, he was fond of selecting as guide the more flamboyant rather than the more restful masters: he preferred Rubens and Vandyke to Giotto and Masolino, yet, strange to say, his movements were the movements which Giotto teaches and not those of Rubens.

But the paradox will not do us any harm.

You must not be put out by "advisers" who tell you that you have nothing to learn from Giotto, for example. You may be quite a different person from the "adviser"——that individual who has so little to do that he advises every one else to do as little——and you will do well not to trouble about people who tell you that movement is not to be learned from studying movement in pictures. It *is* to be so learned, and in schools of the dance the pupils——nay, even

the masters —— give much time to study of the movement in designs, not only upon Greek vases, but in sculpture and early paintings.

But be careful to select for your study none but the best masters. The best masters of dramatic movement are Giotto, Masolino, Michael Angelo and Rembrandt, though the two first are finer than the two last —— finer because more restful, having brought movement down to a state of repose. The other two may be said to "work it up" more, although at times Rembrandt is very restrained, and often the most poignant of all.

For facial expression these four will still serve you as very noble tutors. Fra Angelico, Franz Hals, Teniers and Hogarth are also tutors of this subject, still Giotto is even here the finest master of all, but very, very difficult to understand. You must not think, however, that facial expression is "making faces." You probably do not think so, but do not forget it.

For costume and scene, including light and shadow, all the masters are very valuable, and though I still put Giotto first, you will do well to study Fra Angelico a great deal and not forget Rembrandt. Michael Angelo is of little use to you here.

Beware of the "superb" masters. The Theatre has followed all these men a little too much, hoping to be able to reproduce their "superbness", and has utterly failed. These "superb" fellows are Titian, Tintoretto and Veronese.

When a stage manager turns to an old master to help him in his need for such plays as "The Merchant of Venice" or "Much Ado About Nothing", he too often seeks out Paolo Veronese and Tintoretto. He would do better to learn from Carpaccio, who in movement, costume and scene is quiet without being austere like many Italians, yet who avoids being over-rich and noisy like Veronese.

You are not to think I am finding fault with a master; I only wish to point to one whom I consider better fitted to instruct you. Carpaccio is the golden mean between the very calm church painters and the very swagger city painters—— the balance between the sacred and profane.

For nearly all the Shakespearean plays of which the scenes are laid in Italy, Carpaccio is the most admirable master. He lived between 1478 and 1522. His scenes and costumes are mostly Venetian, and these of course will not do for "Romeo and Juliet" if you wish to be correct in detail. But do you wish to be correct in detail or correct in spirit? If the latter, then study Carpaccio without fear.

I have forgotten to mention the Bellinis, for our publisher has not as yet favoured us with a book of their pictures; possibly he may do so before long. If you want to get reproductions of them now, you will find them in slightly more expensive works, such as "Monographs on Artists", edited by Knackfuss and translated into English

by now. I forget what they cost——possibly five shillings or a dollar each.

The publisher of the little volumes I have mentioned has issued also many others of interest, amongst them being four volumes of the Drawings of Old Masters (each sixpence), and a little work on Fossil Plants which will be very useful to you as a help in studying patterns. Then there are a couple of volumes of "The Masterpieces of Sculpture."

Dancers and actors have often availed themselves of the sculpture of the masters, but except in one or two instances have benefited very little. There is something too cold, too perfect, about sculpture to serve the actor. Still, remember to get a book containing the works of Donatello.

I have not gone much into detail here, but bless me, don't blame me for it! Still, if you wish I will do so another time, for there is plenty to be said on the subject, and I shall be glad to return to it. Meantime I may as well tell you which masters you need not trouble to study at all; they are Reynolds, Murillo, Raeburn, Del Sarto, Correggio, Poussin, Gainsborough, Luini and Greuze.

By the way you ought to write to the publisher and ask him when he will publish a volume of Leonardo's pictures and some volumes of Leonardo's *drawings*. These you should secure as soon as you get the chance, and carry on you wherever you go——for he is the master of masters for everything.

On looking back at what I have written I seem to have been talking a great deal about something I don't entirely believe in. Who wants to be studying from pictures? What worth as models have they beside the body of a man or a woman? Who was this Giotto and who were Carpaccio and Angelico anyhow? And what was I thinking about when I advised you to take men of the past as your tutors: to look behind you when walking forwards? And now if I tell you to study nothing but Nature what do you care for my advice? You will say I tell you one thing to-day and another to-morrow: you can find a better counsellor for your money.

Well, do as you will. Look for good counsel; try to discover it in the north or in the south, at night or by day; and when you have found it try to secure it in a box or in a sentence; do not be cheated of a certainty. It's a certainty you want, is it? Yes, and if you search for that, you will find yourself turning round and round without stopping, and you will possibly get giddy. But should you care to hear me to the end I am quite willing, and it will save you from chasing after phantoms.

Many artists tell us that Nature is the greatest teacher. M. Rodin never ceases telling us so, and what he says always brings us nearer the truth. But it is not the whole truth. Nature may be the best teacher for certain artists, but is assuredly the hardest, and young students have

much to learn before passing into that class presided over by the great head-master. Conceive the helplessness of a student of divinity on being told that his best master was God! It is the truth; but it is also true that the best masters for beginners are the prophets.

Therefore go to the Masters first and then go to Nature. Each explains, while appearing to contradict, the other. But because the paradox seems puzzling do not take refuge under the modern cloak of inane repetition of modern formulas. Avoid facility —— and this you will do if you keep your eye upon Nature and the Old Masters.

I hope that what I have said here will prove of some practical value to you.

FLORENCE, 1910.

ON THE OLD SCHOOL OF ACTING

TOMMASO SALVINI, the highest authority on acting of his time, disapproved of the term "Old School" in connection with the word "Acting."

I had employed the phrase "*the Old School of Acting*", meaning what we most of us have meant for many a year——and Signor Salvini took some trouble to correct me.

"Old school——new school——what does it mean?" he asked. "There is only one school ——*La scuola della verità.* The School of Truth. *L'unica forma è il vero.* No?"

Now with any lesser man we should argue, and ask him to explain his meaning a little more precisely. But it will be far more sensible in us if we accept the correction and learn to pull ourselves up whenever we divide the indivisible, and repeat over and over again to ourselves: "There is only one school——*La scuola della verità.*"

So if my title remains as I originally planned it, this is the last time that I shall use the phrase "the old school."

My first meeting with Signor Salvini was in Florence in January, 1913, when he was eighty-four years of age. I called on him with Signor

Carlo Placci, who had undertaken to interpret between us, and we talked for an hour.

Salvini's voice was quiet, his mind clear, and although so old he was physically in good condition. In appearance he seemed to me on that first meeting to resemble Bismarck. It was chiefly his face and his voice which one remarked, and he used these with very great effect when speaking about the theatre.

And of course he spoke to me of the theatre and of nothing else.

On that first occasion Carlo Placci began by explaining that I was once a student under Irving. Salvini said that he had known him.

Scenting a criticism of Irving's methods as an actor, I hastened to assure Salvini that Irving was not a good master, as masters go; that is to say, that where he was really triumphant was as an actor, and that as a master he always wished to impose his own personality on the pupil, which is not the business of a master. The master should lead his pupil, and should be ready to help at every turn, but he should leave the pupil quite free. If the pupil becomes like the master, it is then from choice and not because he sees no other means of expression than that of imitating the master.

So I told Signor Salvini that Irving was not a good teacher. At this he raised his eyebrows just as one fancies that Bismarck (that old German actor) must have done on occasions, and

cried out, "*Ma curioso!*" (*that's strange!*) —— then, turning to Placci, he said in very dulcet tones which rose and fell like a voice of the last century, "I always understood that was the special quality which Irving possessed."

"No," I said, acting in my turn, and trying to look as foolish and young as possible. "We, the younger people of his theatre, used to think of him primarily as a great actor."

Seeing my expression he did not continue to speak further upon this matter for the moment.

I then told him that we in England were in a sense a race of policemen. The policeman is typical of the English race. This probably is an exaggeration, but it sketches the picture, especially for Italian comprehension, and serves to explain how Irving, with his scientific movements, his scientific play of voice, was interpreting that type —— man as policeman, a passionate man expressing no passions, the man who quietly controls multitudes and says little, and has no expression on his face; and that to do this was the best that could be done in England so far as acting went.

I then told him that for me there was only one kind of acting, Italian acting —— at least, that was the kind of acting I enjoyed most —— and that on entering an Italian theatre, no matter in how small a town in Italy, I felt in a good humour with all the people there, both in the audience and on the stage: that I felt that snobbery had not

come into the place since it was built, and never would; and that no one was curious about any one there, but that all were interested and prepared to be like guests at a table: that there was no "neighbour", that there was no ticket-holder who sat next to you, but that here the whole world was in harmony, and quite at its ease. I had in my mind two typical theatres, Scarpetta's at Naples, and the Politeama Nazionale in Florence.

But Salvini continued to speak of English actors.

"They are not serious," he said.

Of course he dropped some very nice and charming things at the same time, and spoke in great praise of the beautiful voice of Irving and of his expressive face, but he kept on reverting to the same phrase——"he is not serious."

I think he expected us to be surprised and not to understand, so we waited; and he then went on to describe his impressions on going to see Irving play "Hamlet."

These impressions are in a book of his Memoirs, but I do not happen to have the book, and so I will tell what Salvini himself told to me.

Looking very grave, and with his voice lowered, he began:

"When I was in London, Irving was at the height of his fame, and I wished to see a performance that I had heard spoken about by every one I met. So I took my 'loge', and I prepared myself for a great treat.

"The curtain rose on the first act.

"I saw a figure, melancholy, distinguished, pathetic, noble. I was enchanted.

"I listened to the end of the first act, which was most finely interpreted. Irving's beautiful gestures, his grave expression, the tender and solemn notes of his voice, all conspired to create a very strong impression. I was greatly touched.

"At the end of the first act I said, 'Yes, that is "Hamlet."'

"During the interval between the first and second acts, I saw a friend in the stalls and called him up. I was depressed.

"The curtain rose on the second act, and again I was enthralled, charmed and saddened. It was a wonderful and dignified piece of work. I said to myself as the curtain fell on the second act, '"Hamlet" is not for me.'

"I turned to my friend and assured him I should not play 'Hamlet' in London. 'Say what you will,' said I, 'this is the most perfect rendering that can possibly be dreamed of; it is impossible for me to attempt it.'

"The curtain rose on the third act; I was all attention. It was the scene between Hamlet and Ophelia; but, to my astonishment, everything was changed. Where it had been profound and serious before, now something was different.

"I find it difficult to explain," went on Salvini, "why the English actor, after having progressed so far should suddenly have changed, here, at the

most serious moment of the drama, at the meeting between Hamlet and Ophelia. But changed he was —— *cambiato addirittura.*" Then he added, "That is not serious."

To me all this was very interesting, for I know the Italian actors, and I understood what he meant when he said the English are not serious. I have seen many Italian players, and they have the charming way of distinguishing nicely between that which is very serious and that which is not really serious. Characteristics are not serious to them; passion is serious. To sit at the table as in the first act of "Mrs. Tanqueray" and discuss people and things, is to these men so unimportant a matter that they will prefer to wait until the dramatist has been moved with the passion in a play before they will move. Because, I suppose, they say, "Why should we waste ourselves now, why be serious about these external and cold parts of life, these manners, when already the eternal and vivid life itself is signalled to appear, and will later on demand all our seriousness?"

It is quite obvious that the actors in England do the opposite and expend themselves on externals; at least, it is generally so, although there are some exceptions. But Salvini felt that even our great exception failed in this, and so he passes the judgment, "Not serious."

Nor was he any more encouraging about the French, the Spanish, or the Russian stage. Of

the German stage he was rather inclined to think well, and I was somewhat surprised at this, considering that the Italian temperament and the German are so wide apart.

"Mounet-Sully?"

"Mounet-Sully is the darling of the French, but he is not serious. Although he is so fine in much of his work, when he tries to render passion he at once adopts strained unnatural gestures and a whining, chanting voice as if he were a singer: it is enough to throw one into a fever. He is no longer *true*. He suffers from the tradition of the Comédie Française. In fact he, and Irving, and most of the foreign actors, while able to *imitate* Nature up to a certain point, can go no further. Beyond that point their imitation ceases to *be Nature* and becomes conventional, with exaggerated gestures and mannerisms."

Of the Italian actors, speaking of those of today, he said that he found them all limited, good only in one direction, even if in that.

He classed the styles of acting under three forms: Comedy, which treats of familiar life *lightly;* Drama, which treats of familiar life *seriously;* Tragedy, which is quite different, treating of *imaginative* fictitious persons, often composed in verse, and yet requiring the actor to convince the audience that the speech is normal and that the characters are real. None of the modern actors, he said, are good in all three styles. They are all comedians, not tragedians — comedians

acting tragedy. A tragic actor is not to be found.

"When I was a young man," he went on, "we had many tragedians. Modena" (here Salvini's whole person swelled, his eyes dilated), "he was my master —— not an actor —— a god!"

He said this not in a loud voice, but solemnly, gently, perhaps as excusing the rest of humanity. It was charming, this recollection of his old master —— by a master. Then he mentioned other names, unknown to me, and he spoke of them all as being very fine, and serious actors.

He went on, "All the modern actors who are now filling the important rôles in the theatres of Italy would, in those days, have been given the fifth or sixth rôles."

Carlo Placci here broke in with, "Then you consider that the stage in Italy has deteriorated since those days?"

To this Salvini, after a pause, gave a decided "Yes."

I then asked him whether he would also go so far as to say that he believed that when he was a young man the stage had deteriorated from the stage of fifty years previous to that time.

Salvini looked perhaps a little bit suspicious as to what that might mean, though I cannot tell what was passing in his head, but in the end he said, "I am inclined to think that such was the case."

Towards the close of that first visit I asked him

if there was time for him to look at some of my designs, and I spread these before him. They were a loose set of prints then on the eve of being issued in my book, "Towards a New Theatre." He took them, and we began going through them, and every now and then he picked out certain designs and put them aside together in a heap. These designs which he had put aside he now took up and spread out before him; then, leaning back in his chair, he settled down and looked at them, saying a word which is more often used in Italy than elsewhere —— "Beautiful!"

His voice had again assumed the mysterious and hushed tones that he loved so much to play with on his stage, and of course I was very pleased.

But to receive praise was not my object in showing the designs to Salvini. I wanted to hear one thing from him, as the representative of the great days of acting, so I asked him, "Will you please tell me, can the actor *act* in such a scene?"

He turned round as if the ghost in "Hamlet" was about to enter. He frowned, and said "*Macché!*" which is untranslatable, but means here, "Why ask me such an amazing question?" and he added, "These scenes *liberate* the actor; they liberate him from the little Gothic room in which he has been shut." He then drew a big breath, spread out his chest, and put out his hands, as if about to address the Senate in that wonderful

speech in "Othello" —— "Most potent, grave and reverend Signors:" — then he touched one of the steps in one of the designs. You felt he wanted to be moving on it.

I then told him that in England actors put forward the argument that, although the scenes were beautiful in themselves, they were impossible to be acted in.

His eyebrows went up and down, he touched the design again and said in measured tones, "The actor who cannot act in that scene is no true artist" (*non è artista*).

He always spoke in measured tones. He was never loose in his manner of speech, never offhand.

He then took my hand as we were going and held it for some time, as actors do with the younger men and women, and, while holding it, he spoke further and very gravely of my work. As what he said was not about the actor in relation to the scene, there is no need to record it here. But sweeter and more encouraging things I have never yet had said to me by any one in the theatre —— any one of so ripe an experience.

I had never before met a great actor of the past who told me that my scenes were good to act in, though often an incompetent actor had said they were impossible.

And so that first meeting with Tommaso Salvini in 1913 is one of the most memorable days of my life. Where old men of thirty, forty

and fifty had seen a foe in me, and looked upon me and my ideas as a danger to themselves, this young man of eighty-four saw a friend, and gave me a guarantee that my principles will prevail.[1]

FLORENCE, 1915.

[1] See page 55.

A LETTER TO ELLEN TERRY

MOTHER——as Benvenuto Cellini, according to the modern poet, said to Michael Angelo, "Michael, let us talk about art," so I to you——"Mamma, let us discuss the theatre."

You know how we always discuss the theatre ——I, talking for about four hours at a stretch and you, saying, "Yes, my dear, I know"; and I with forefinger uplifted saying, "Don't you see, don't you see?" while I'm quite unconscious that, before I was, you saw. So let us continue at a distance the "Don't you sees" and the "I knows."

To begin with, it is a particularly fine day here. "Here" is Italy; "Here" is Florence, and in the middle of it your son and his optimism.

The——Newspaper comes here every day. I continually read of your nightly conversion of Captain Brassbound, and sometimes of Nance Oldfield. Do you remember the fearful rapidity with which Nance Oldfield first leapt upon the Lyceum stage? Was it three days that the play was produced in, or twelve? It was not much longer at any rate.

What an excellently bad actor I was! And what a dreadful good actress you were!

How exceedingly difficult it is for young actors and actresses, when playing with masters of the art, to do anything at all, unless the young actor or actress is a little bit brilliant, rather stupid, and absolutely conceited. How difficult it is to do anything but sit down and look on! One feels such a duffer. They must all feel duffers. The ease with which the great actor passes from thought to thought with hardly a movement of a muscle; the control the great actors have over their voices, so that they can say many things in one sentence; the way in which they are able to pass from one side of the stage to the other without seeming to have moved at all; all these things are amazing and confounding for the young actor, making him impatient that he cannot do this or anything like this. And then, when the son of his mother cannot do this——"'orror on 'orror's 'ead haccumulates," as the old prompter used to say. And here is the funny thing, too, about it; that even a most intellectual, a most ideal mind, if trained for thirty years, could not do it, could it?——does it?——has it ever been known to?

Can acting ever be taught? No; you 've said so hundreds of times. NO. But though you have never claimed the laurel of the critic, still you are quite right, you must be. Don't you mean that you cannot teach acting as you can teach the rules of proportion or as you can teach counterpoint? These things have laws which hold good for all artists, architects and musicians, and by follow-

ing which a decently musical or artistic being can create beautiful harmonies, pictures or buildings, but by disregarding which can be created hideous confusion.

"I know, my dear, I know." A gentle and a sweet sniff, a raising of the head as if looking far into the distance, and in your movements I hear your answer.

But how right you are, how entirely right. Acting cannot be taught. And as it cannot be taught, acting will ever remain one of those beautiful chance products which seldom are seen in their full beauty. How many times in a century is it seen? Six or eight? I dare say you in your generosity would say ten. And how many actors are there in the world to-day?

I am just now writing a fearsome looking essay which commences "Acting is not an art. Actors are not artists," and the rest of it.[1] Now that's a bright way to begin, but when you read it, you will know what it all means. You will know that I am following up that which you assert —— that acting cannot be taught, that it has not laws; that, obviously, if this is true it is no art.

I think if it had any laws you would have found them out long ago and would have told me. Then what also supports what I advance is the fact that Madame Duse speaks in something of the same strain, saying that until all the actors

[1] See "On the Art of the Theatre", page 55 (Heinemann.)

die of the plague the stage will not be saved. As you know, she goes on to say, "They poison the air, they make art impossible"; and she probably includes herself — don't you think so? — because she is not vain or stupid. She probably means that to stop acting altogether, and for the theatre to be thoroughly swept out —— brushing aside all the plays, all the costumes and the rest of the Lord Mayor's Show —— would leave the place so blank and so fresh in its emptiness that when the people of the theatre once more entered it they would enter in a different spirit, and in royal trim; courage up, pride up, and purpose fixed; and with those qualities behind them they would be in a condition to create works of their own without assistance of the playwright, of the costumer or of the orchestra. I think that is her opinion. The staff on which her flag waves has no end. The flag can go up and up without reaching the top. I believe that the great actors possess the power of creating pieces of work without assistance from any one else; that is to say, I believe that you, or one of the few others, could, taking some theme or some two themes —— let us say the idea of meeting or the idea of parting —— out of these things, by movement, scene and voice, put before the audience all the different meanings of all the joys and sorrows that are wrapped up in the idea of meeting and the idea of parting. Especially could a woman do this.

Let us, as it were, now make such a piece. We

search in our imagination or in our memory, or wherever it is to be found, for the vision of those particular places where meetings happen. We gather them all together, ten, twenty, forty, a hundred. Some we throw away for some reason or another as valueless. Those which we have retained, those which we have selected, we put down, either in our memory if we are clever enough, or in writing, or, better still, with a few touches of the brush or pencil on paper. Those which we have selected mean so much to us that when they are set before an audience, in the right way, they will mean as much to them. They cannot fail to do so. So far so good.

We next picture to ourselves, or call up from our remembrance, from the thousand and one sources —— books, pictures, and what we will —— those exquisite and appealing movements which anticipated a meeting, and which lay in the very meeting itself. We recall to mind, or, appealing to our imagination, we meditate long and we beseech it to remind us of all those sounds which are connected with this theme. Not merely sounds of the voice, but those sounds innumerable by which even a blind man can tell what is happening and what is about to happen, as clearly as if he could see it.

Having got together this material, these three separate collections, as it were, of things done, things seen, things heard (and even while we were collecting them we have been particular to put

aside and commingle only those which were of the same family), we can say we have gathered together so many harmonies in movement, scene and voice on this theme. We know that no artist will express these in the same way, and in the expression is the indefinable quality which here cannot be talked about. One will make his movements symbolical, another will make them realistic. One will make his scenes a vision, retaining only the very essence of the ideas which he has gathered together; another will make his a realistic scene. One will utter sounds musical in their quality, and will convey a sense —— a *hint* of the thing; another will state facts, using matter-of-fact words; and in either case success can be attained, although the finer success comes with the imaginative treatment.

Let us take a meeting, one special one that I can think of. Do you remember the etching of Blind Tobit by Rembrandt? It is very dramatic. Get it and look at it now. The picture represents him in the moment when he hears the voice outside the door, and rising, hurries across the room, his face glowing, his body trembling. The old man makes for his own shadow, which grows larger and larger on the wall as he advances. He has missed the door entirely. We see in the picture how in rising he has overturned a spinning-wheel. We see a little dog, unconscious of his blindness, is running between his legs. Yet on he goes, hopelessly, towards his own shadow (a

very dramatic invention), and soon the expected one will arrive.

What we do not see in the picture but what we can imagine from it, is that beautiful yet restless state of waiting previous to this movement — this climax — this meeting; and we can imagine the beautiful patience which such a figure would convey to an audience, as silently in his room he waits for the appointed time of his delivery. I can imagine the many little noises in the room, the larger noises outside, and from the multitudinous examples which Nature has to offer surely we can select a dozen, or two dozens at the most, of the *significant* sounds which will emphasize either the patience, the anxiety, the restlessness, or the love of old Tobit for the one who is coming. I can hear as he sits there waiting, an old Jewish book of the law on his knees, which he holds as a young man holds a bunch of flowers. I can hear him repeating in a deep soft voice law after law, and then bursting forth with the familiar words of his prayer for extermination. I find in these words sufficient use of the voice and sufficient suggestion by words for my purpose. Soon the voice of the one who is coming will be heard far off. We know what the tones mean without hearing a word. It is the old love cry of "I am here"; and his cry which answers is but the same response —— "Here am I."

And so with the hundreds of actual meetings which are recorded in history; and so with the

abstract ideas of Meeting and Parting. You, and the other great workers in the theatre, could present such to the audience.

We have talked about this, I think, but not so much in detail as now; and I think you agreed, when the question came up, as to what the gain would be. We have found the gain to be a certain spontaneity, inasmuch as the performer was not hampered in his expression by having to fit himself to the shape and size of the dramatist.

I was speaking to somebody about this the other day, when they asked me did I mean *Dumb Show*. Surely it is only in the theatre that such a word could have been coined! A very negative affair, dumb show; and to be negative is not the business of the theatre or of any art. The presentation or vision, or whatever you like to call it, would not take the place of words; for having a natural and particular material of its own for expressing all it would wish to, it would be sufficient for itself; it already has "a place", and would leave words to keep their own place.

FLORENCE, 1908.

What is the last word? What is all this driving at, do you think?

The Liberation of the Actor.

Have I suggested too little for him? Will it be all too fragmentary? would he rather have us demand from him a perfect, a completed work of art in the first years of his trial? How can a

child be asked to race like a man or even to walk like a youth?

Always and now here, again, *I ask only for the liberation of the actor that he may develop his own powers,* and cease from being the marionette of the playwright.

ROME, 1917.

YVETTE GUILBERT

"Has she improved?" I was asked yesterday.
"No, Madam, she has *not*," I replied; "and yet she is the greatest tragic actress of to-day."
"But I thought she was a comic actress?"
"Ah, Madam, now you are making fun of me."

THE life of Yvette Guilbert is neither more nor less extraordinary than that of any woman of like fibre. The pity is that there are so few. We see them sometimes seated on the throne, sometimes on a doorstep; sometimes they pass before us on the stage or in a drawing-room. Courage is their prime quality, and to that is added grace or distinction, brilliance or strength, never vulgarity or malice.

Yvette Guilbert is exactly such a woman; never vulgar, never malicious; always striving like fire to be just, and like fire burning up in the flame of this desire all that is not pure enough to stand the heat.

That she is also a great actress is a detail, and certainly it in no way detracts from her great personal verity. This can be said of but few women. When women become actresses they become something false.

I have said that Yvette Guilbert is a great

actress. I said so because people tell me so. Every one tells me so. Some say the greatest actress.

I challenge this. She could not be possessed of that flaming desire to be just and sincere and be an actress at the same time——no, not even the greatest actress.

I think I would prefer to call her a poet, and if I may be allowed to do so I will.

She creates, and that which she creates is poetry ——a kind of poetry. Like Shakespeare and most of the great dramatists she takes some rag of verse or story and emblazons upon it the names of many victories won by the proud and the brave over the mean and the cowardly. This is her banner woven by her own hands. She is certainly a poet, a fighting poet. She is certainly no actress; actresses never fight for a cause, they squabble for personal fame, and hate all causes——all principles. And they hate their "Art." The proof of this lies in their taking to flight, in their deserting the guns when the bullets begin to fly.

Madame Yvette never does this.

In her book she tells the story of her early life; the whole tale is of a long fight, and she does not tell how easy it would have been for her to give in and win a different success by using different weapons. That remains yet for some one to do.

It is Yvette Guilbert's distinction not to have compromised, and not to have accepted quarter; not to have acted off the stage, not to have acted

at all, and yet to be on the stage all the time. It is nothing short of gigantic in its loveliness.

This has been Madame Yvette Guilbert's lovely past; we can witness her present; now for the future.

What is that to be? She will fight——she must.

For this we salute her. She is all we admire most; she is that which fights against all that is mean, ugly or vulgar——against that vast Rebellion of man and woman who sin against Nature and God——in being small.

ALASSIO, 1911.

SADA YACCO

NATURE still seems to find the old way to be the best way of creating. She produces results by precisely the same methods she employed millions of years ago. Her mountains, flowers, moons and men are probably all of them different from what they were once upon a time, but in producing them she has not flirted with new mediums.

The artist who follows this law of nature does not go far wrong. We search back for the origin of things, not to copy them, but to learn by what method and in what material they were made.

For centuries they understood in the East that only the masculine mind was fitted for stage performances. The actor had learnt his lesson thoroughly, and was content to hide his person and personality under the mask and the robe, and had learnt to value the result. He was following in the footsteps of nature where the creator is always hidden.

To-day in Japan everything is being changed, and many of the changes are both necessary and good. It would be ridiculous to go to war with a Western Power in the ancient junks; it would be folly to oppose the old double-handed sword

to the Maxim gun. In daily life also much has been altered, and altered for the better.

But although all these things may be improvements it by no means follows that their art can be improved by changing the methods and materials which have been employed to such great results in the past.

Sada Yacco was the first lady to go upon the stage in Japan. The innovation was a pity. She then passed into Europe to study the modern theatres there, and more especially the Opera House in Paris, intending to introduce such a theatre into Japan——it is to be presumed with the idea of advancing the art of the Japanese theatre.

There can be no hesitation in saying that she is doing both the country and its theatre a grievous wrong. Art can never find a new way of creating better than the primitive way which the nation learned as children learn from Nature.

The introduction of women upon the stage is held by some to have caused the downfall of the European theatre, and it is to be feared that it is destined to bring the same disaster to Japan, since it is announced that Madame Yacco intends not only to use actresses for the female rôles, but to introduce other occidental customs upon her new stage.

It must not for a moment be supposed that the introduction of women on to the stage proceeds entirely from motives of improving the art. His-

tory shows that there have often been motives of economy behind the innovation.

Women are always glad to appear before an audience for next to nothing, and managers of all periods have proved themselves glad to avail themselves of this feminine weakness. Whenever the swing of the pendulum brings round an age of increased commercialism, it is to be noticed that the wives and daughters are always selected to do the work previously done by men, and that this, beginning by drawing them out of their own sphere, ends by forcing them out of it, since, while women are working for lower wages than those formerly paid to men, the men, on their part, are without employment and are thus no longer able to support the women. The result is, therefore, disastrous economically as well as artistically.

Before the art of the stage can revive women must have passed off the boards.[1] No originality is claimed for this idea; it is an idea as old as the hills; it has been tried, and, like the hills, has never been known to fail; whereas the actress for many reasons has been known to fail lamentably. In saying this I in no way imply the failure of woman; it is a failure due to circumstances against which nature and other powerful things oppose themselves.

A section of English women once banded themselves together to prepare the way for the exodus

[1] See footnote to "Art or Imitation", page 134.

of women from the theatre. These ladies were called Suffragettes. In doing a little wrong to themselves they did a great right to their sisters in the theatre. They opened hundreds of other doors through which the women will enter, and, in entering these, will leave the stage.

Thousands of women who want something to do go on the stage; thousands of women who want to make a little money go on the stage; but the Suffragettes, by their agitation, made it possible for these same women to go somewhere else: they have trained a new kind of woman, and the new kind of woman will not take kindly to painting her face since she will have learned by her superior intelligence that paint hurts the skin; neither will she know how to play those feminine rôles which the poets always choose to write because these characters are composed of a mass of things which will no longer interest her. Instead of pretending to be the stupid Ophelia she will have joined some society for saving those who would have committed suicide by drowning—— a far more useful occupation than imitating a drowned lady. Instead of pretending to be a girl who through some spontaneous sweetness of disposition stands up to a Jew in the law courts of Venice, she will be far better employed in the law courts of Fleet Street. In fact, when woman lives and works in the stern real world, she will leave the pretty mimic world.

If it is suggested that men have not done this,

though men are in the real world, the answer is that men take themselves very seriously as artists, and the mimic world becomes for them the real world. With women it is quite different. And besides, what men and women do and feel is always different; the two can never be compared.

Until I perceived all this I had less sympathy with the Suffragettes than I have now that I see the good they have done to the theatre, and that these ladies by doing a little wrong achieve this great right —— a masculine theatre.

And then the Masks ——!

FLORENCE, 1910.

NEW DEPARTURES

IT is pitiful to read in the history of the theatre of the wrecks women have made of many good managerial ships which attempted to reach the Fortunate Isles.

The histories of the Restoration Stage, of Garrick's theatrical life, of the Comédie Française, of the German stage in the eighteenth century and of nearly every theatre since women first tendered their assistance in the middle part of the seventeenth century, contain the records of the methods employed by women to harass the different managements, and the success they achieved by these methods.

Woman — beautiful, noble and unselfish as she often is in daily life — is a continual threat to the existence of art in the theatre, and also to the successful management of the theatre.

Those who are thought to be the exceptions —— the great names —— are, alas, the worst offenders.

This is not open to argument, for history tells us the facts plainly enough. The unselfish women become the most selfish, the most egotistical, under the influence of public applause. They lose their heads —— and such pretty heads, too. It is a great pity; it is a great calamity for the stage.

To achieve the reform of the Theatre, to bring it into the condition necessary for it to become a fine art, women must have first left the boards. I arrive at this conclusion first through my study of the stage, and secondly because of my great admiration for, and some knowledge of, womankind.

THE WISE AND THE FOOLISH VIRGINS

HE. Women are worthless on the stage.
SHE. Women are invaluable.
HE. When you say that you substitute a new value for the old one. Women are more valuable than you think. It is because you undervalue them that you say they are valuable on the stage. Their value is in the natural, not in the artificial world; in the greater, not in the less; in the substance, not in the shadow.

NOW doubtless some one will say: "This book would be excellent if it were not for these absurd statements about women."

How much I agree with that.

But another will say: "The book's all right, only the passages about marionettes should be omitted — they are futile."

Again I'm sure you're right.

And a third puts her hand on my arm, saying: "All is perfect — perfect — only remove those remarks about Democracy."

Quite right — but —

A fourth — a fifth — and a few more, and all you would have for your money is an index, a title page and two covers.

Whereas here I give you all something to rend — something to spurn — something to pass over — and something to forgive — and something still remains for me! . . .

(1872–1917.)

TO ELEONORA DUSE

NO, not an actress, but something more; not an artist, but something less; a personality——and then something far more than all these three.

No one can call Eleonora Duse an actress, yet in spite of this many people have tried to write about the "acting" of Eleonora Duse. Frenchmen and Dutchmen, Englishmen and Italians, Americans of the North and of the South have vied with each other in praise of her extraordinary genius for "acting."

Some, amazed by a certain natural impression which she creates as she steps before us, dazzled by the extraordinary naturalness of her speech, set out to praise this in her. Some will linger upon a particular detail——upon the ease with which she is able to summon up the gradual overwhelming blush as in "Magda." Others will cry out that it is astonishing how this actress is able at will to become pale as only those who are fainting become pale. Others will write of the unfailing taste which controls every thought and every action of the actress. A fifth, comparing her with Sarah Bernhardt, will speak of the marvellous reserve of her acting and of its veracity, and,

while stating that Sarah Bernhardt leaves nothing to chance and is scientific in her methods, will praise Eleonora Duse as the greater actress for being always swayed by the feeling of the moment. A sixth speaks of her acting as seeming to come from a great depth and to be only half telling profound secrets.

"No play," says a writer, "has ever been profound and simple enough for this woman to say everything she has to say in it."

This last writer gets nearer to the secret —— the little nothing of a secret —— of Eleonora Duse, yet he writes about her as an "actress" as do the others, whereas it seems the only way to write of her is as a woman. She has nothing of art in her composition. She abhors all that goes to make up great art; that is to say, the obedience to laws which are impersonal and immortal. She is personal love, personal courage, personal hope, and personal beauty, and these all whirl her through the long space of her life as some unseen and lonely star is whirling at this moment above our heads.

How childlike and simple it is of these men who would learn her small secret, innocently to enter the theatre —— each on a different night —— and each of them to think he is looking at the same thing! When I think of Eleonora Duse on the stage in front of the world I see, as it were, a lonely yet hopeful figure, draped in some ineffable charm to hide its loneliness, and appealing to the

men who sit there like boys at school. Some are humbled, some are studious, some tremble with a sort of repressed excitement, some sit wondering; but none of them seem to hear what she is crying out, and that cry seems to be: "Release me, release me from this agony! unchain me from this rock to which Fate has bound me! Kill all these hideous monsters which wait to devour me!"

And even now I pretend not that I have found the secret of Eleonora Duse. I am not able to believe that I could ever solve that vast problem. I come somewhere near it when I say that may be there is no problem to solve. But rather than commit myself to so great a vanity I must perforce address myself to other things —— and first to the consideration of the evil which comes to our art by connecting such wonderful people and the term "Artist" together.

No one can seriously call an actor or actress an artist of the Theatre; and as no one can seriously call this extraordinary being, Eleonora Duse, an actress, so doubly is she not an artist of the Theatre. An artist dies daily for his art. To an artist nothing less than perfection is possible. An artist will sooner never commence his work than finish with it in an imperfect state. An artist is unselfishness personified. He lives for an ideal, and for the sake of that ideal everything else in the world is destroyed. An artist is never to be heard saying "I should like to", but only "I will." And what is it he wills? It is, as I have

said, Perfection, Perfection, and nothing short of Perfection.

No man or woman in the theatre of to-day wills such perfection. Each actor and actress, each manager, each scene-painter carries in his being a soul of compromise. Rather than be in a fix himself he will put his art in a fix. All the workers in the theatre, from the greatest to the lowest, feel that they have to be incessantly active, showing something, whether ready or not ready —— and it is always a case of not ready.

With the actor, he brings his own part up to a certain incomplete perfection. He knows his own lines, he knows how much emotion to pour into them, and having done this he thinks he has created a work of art. He has not done so; he has been content with very much less than the least perfection; he is not an artist; and this wonderful woman, Eleonora Duse, she, too, is content with less than perfection. This is the rock to which she is bound.

If it were not so, with the force and the beauty and, as I believe, the strength which is in her, she could create a state in which the creation of a work of art might become possible.

Let me at once say that this spirit of force and beauty would not use its person, fingers or hands to fashion this work of art, and would for ever put aside the thought of such a deed as unnatural. It is love which creates, and nothing but love ever will create.

The man or woman who greatly and entirely loves the Art of the Theatre, with a love in which no grain of selfishness lingers, but which is surrounded by circles of pride, such an one can heal the Theatre——can restore vitality to its poor and broken body and can then perform the miracle with its soul.

And what a love is this! How white and crystal hot, the passion with which a man as lonely as he is great might, phœnix-like, consume himself while creating a new life and beauty from his own destruction! And how much more might a woman do this! A man may say so.

Not to descend and with feminine hands attempt the work of men, and in meddling with those beautiful hands spoil all the fingers by fingering all the spoils; not to descend among us ——the workmen at the anvil——except in a momentary vision; but to remain aloof and beyond as the gracious moon which shines down and illumines all things at night, changing here, changing there with the hours so that we shall not tire of her, but shall ever be able to say, "Lo, the moon is at the full;" or, "Behold, the new moon!"

And do not we mortals continually talk about this new moon? A happy and delicious mother-kindness is behind this idea of a beauty which rises in the skies and continually changes for her sons——continually soothes, continually passes, rises and then falls——charms, is ever attracting

—— speaks in profound silences, whispers, laughs —— is a girl, is a wise woman —— sleeps —— does this all for us, her sons, never changing in that.

And some such raised thing, some such sweet influence shedding down beams of assurance, of calm, cold promise —— that is what we want. Some beauty, too great for thought of self, too round to contain any hollows.

I began to write of her —— of Eleonora Duse —— that is, of a great name. But now I speak to her, to this Something which is not a name. To you who, when you will, may step up this ladder of the fairies which has waited for you until now —— a silver thing hanging down from the skies, thrown down by the gods and held at the end which touches our earth by the youngest children of the Theatre who love their lost Art with all their hearts —— boys who beg of you to step upon this ladder and rise before their eyes, rung by rung, higher and higher away from us, so that you may be for ever near us, enthroned.

The thought and vision of the Sibyls fills my mind. I see the Sibyls of old and listen to the tale of their great happiness. Their story opens with a long unutterable sorrow; it ends with a deep and mounting joy. They tell me of the flowers and of their mountain heroes and how their heroes died; and then a great wailing arises in which all other sounds are lost. They seem to wail on incessantly for an age —— an age which

is but a moment; so lonely, so unending a pain upon the dry and lonely mountains. As before some strange upheaval in Nature, all sounds of birds and beasts have ceased so their voices are hushed——Silence. And then slowly the wonder of the morning's light——Wisdom.

Step up, sweet Mystery, ascend this ladder which we hold. Become the Thirteenth Sibyl. Ascend, find there Wisdom which awaits you and then cast down to us a Truth to heal us, and another Truth to guide us, and another Truth to cheer us, and innumerable Truths of eternal Life that we may live for that which we love——for our Art, for our beautiful Theatre.

FLORENCE, 1908.

LADIES, TEMPERAMENT AND DISCIPLINE

STAGE MANAGER. More discipline is necessary in the theatre. Too many of the failures in the theatre can be attributed to lack of discipline. Think of how many plays never get as far as the first rehearsal because an actress is displeased with her maid! I know of a case where a series of twelve plays was going to be produced by a famous European actress. The stage director and the actress were to have prepared these together. Everything was decided, and the director had gone to commence his part of the work. Suddenly he received a telegram: "'Hedda Gabler' impossible. No one to play servant." He turned to the second play which was, let us say, "The Lady from the Sea." Next day a second telegram: "So sorry width of stage only 36 instead of 37 feet. Obliged to put off 'Lady from the Sea.'" So he turned to the third play, "John Gabriel Borkman." A third telegram arrived: "Can't do 'John Gabriel Borkman.' All my actors too foolish." Then he turned to the fourth play, "Œdipus Rex." Another telegram! "We won't proceed with 'Œdipus Rex',

don't like the play." On the following day he looked through the plays which were left, and, with a feeling of security on seeing "Hamlet", set to work on that. Promptly arrived a telegram: "'Hamlet' most gloomy play I ever read. Makes me cry to read it, so am obliged to cut it out of repertoire." He turned then to "Much Ado About Nothing", which was included in the list, but received a sixth telegram in the morning: "Was ever anything so ludicrous as this play? Can't bear to think of an audience indulging in laughter all the time. Leave out 'Much Ado About Nothing.'" And this went on until there was not one of the twelve plays left.

PLAYGOER. That is interesting, though exaggerated — but can you make no allowances for a great actress's temperament. Remember how she leans against the door in that play by Sudermann!

STAGE MANAGER. Certainly, if you will dispense with a true rendering of the great poet's dramas. But the value of many moments does not even compensate for the loss of twelve splendid dramas and the loss of everybody's temper into the bargain. Shakespeare or any great author is not to be estimated for his *moments* but for the whole play and for his whole life's work. Yet we rave about an actress for the sake of her *moments!*

PLAYGOER. Then do you not value temperament?

STAGE MANAGER. Certainly; but I value only

that temperament which is strong enough to become disciplined.

PLAYGOER. But, can you show me any disciplined people who also have temperament?

STAGE MANAGER. Yes, the great artists —— Dante, Leonardo, Shakespeare, Flaubert, Goethe.

PLAYGOER. But these are exceptions. Can you tell me of any calling where temperament and discipline are equally balanced?

STAGE MANAGER. Certainly, the sailor's.

PLAYGOER. But there is a great deal of difference between the temperament of the sailor and that of the artist.

STAGE MANAGER. Precisely. And there should be none. When we talk of an artist's temperament we generally mean a lot of nervous disorders. Away with your temperament, then! Perhaps if we get discipline, something may come of it. At present nothing but disturbance comes from your "temperament."

PLAYGOER. I think that you are very extreme in your views.

STAGE MANAGER. Yes, I speak in one extreme because I find you speaking in the other. You get warm when you speak of temperament, and I become cold when I think of the damage it does to the stage, and so I advance the theory that discipline is the one and only thing. I know that both are necessary, but that both must be quite genuine.

Let the temperament of each actor develop for

all that his temperament is worth, and let the sense of discipline be developed in every actor in proportion to the force of his temperament. Do not let temperament be an excuse for absence of discipline. It is this which is killing the modern stage.

We want in the theatre the same discipline that there is on a ship, and we want the direction of that ship or theatre to be in the hands of one man who is thoroughly disciplined; but we do not want the man who directs to have the responsibility for the building and upkeep of that theatre or that ship.

PLAYGOER. Then you want the State to be responsible for your theatre?

STAGE MANAGER. *Not for one theatre, but for every theatre in the land.* As it is for its Navy.[1] If the State is responsible for one theatre, it will not take any trouble to study the whole question of the relationship of theatre to nation, but if it has the responsibility of every theatre it will take very great care to do so. And it would be an easier thing to manage all the theatres of England or America than it would be to manage one National Theatre in London or New York. Conceive the idea of having one pet man-of-war which belonged to the nation, while all the others were the product of private enterprise! If you are going to change the order of things as a National Theatre sets out to do, you must have

[1] See John Ruskin's "Fors Clavigera."

sufficient power to enforce that change, and one National Theatre against all the theatres of private enterprise will have no chance whatever.

PLAYGOER. Do you know, I was thinking the same thing myself the other day. I was at a committee meeting for the collection of funds for the English National Theatre, and I had half a mind to say what you have just said.

STAGE MANAGER. Then why didn't you say it? What prevented you?

PLAYGOER. Well, you know, "live and let live." Besides, it would have caused discussion, and if there is a thing I hate it is to create a feeling of disagreement among people.

STAGE MANAGER. Ah, on the principle of "Live and let die?" —— Let us go to dinner!

PLAYGOER. But we were speaking of ladies and the stage, and of their need for discipline.

STAGE MANAGER. I had not forgotten it. The ladies await us at dinner. Let us go there and learn discipline at their hands. But let us not attempt to teach them that or any other folly. Come, lest we be late. Only ladies are allowed to be late, you know.

PLAYGOER. And if a lady is late at rehearsal?

STAGE MANAGER. Then let us request her to leave, but do not correct her. In fact, I am now going to ask one of the two ladies who are to dine with us to leave the stage altogether. You will see how charmed she will be!

FLORENCE, 1910.

PART IV

THE COPYRIGHT LAW

A Suggestion for an Amendment

IT is one of the common and stupid ideas of modern life that a man's work becomes public property when once it has been heard or seen. This stupidity of course comes from the grasping nature of certain business people and from the vanity of certain others.

The vain ones want to be the patrons of that which is in no way connected with them, so they get a business man hot on the track, and think the trick is done.

These tricks are going to be very seldom done in future. Before long an artist's work will be protected not only during his lifetime and for a few score years after, but for the whole time that his family exists.

There is nothing but what is perfectly just and straightforward in such a reservation. Any man on earth who builds a castle on land which belongs to him, is the sole proprietor of that castle: it passes on to his heirs at his death, and his family may keep it as long as that family exists.

The work of the artist is even more his own personal property as he has made it, and it is very

good to see all over the world steps being taken to make this clear. Once this very simple fact becomes evident to all, nothing will ever be heard again of the incapacity of the artist to provide for himself during his lifetime and for his family after.

Nor is there only one side to this question. Both the artist and the public would benefit. At present works of art, especially those of famous men, are fabulously expensive. But, if the artist retained full right over them during his life and the life of his family, works of art would then become very cheap, and the world would have more of them. See how excellent it would be.

If, on the contrary, the modern state of affairs goes on much longer, the price of artists' work will rise and rise. That is to say, no one will be able to get a portrait or a landscape or any similar work of art under about two hundred thousand pounds. That sum properly invested would provide the artist's family with what it would want in the future. But this would also rob the world of hundreds and thousands of works of art, for he would produce but one work every twenty years. If the public does not want to be robbed of its works of art, it had better hasten forward the legislation in regard to the reservation of these works, and the more quickly and actively this is set about, the better.

Only a few years ago the descendants of Charles Dickens became reduced in circumstances owing

to the disgraceful state of the copyright law at that time.

But literature is not the only art which is unprotected. As I have said, painting is, too, and we can add Sculpture, Architecture, Music, and — if I may be permitted to say so — theatrical art as well. For example (to touch no more on theatrical art), a painter of great genius dies. After two or three years his pictures, hitherto laughed at or disregarded, are sold for low sums by the dealers. Let us say that the family of the painter gets a couple of thousand pounds —— generally it is near a couple of *hundred.*

Well, then? In a few years, when the dealer has worked up the reputation of these pictures, we hear of them changing hands again; this time perhaps the pictures fetch an average price of two thousand pounds apiece.

It seems to us that *whenever* a work of art changes hands (except in the case of a book or a piece of music or a print, unless it be the original book, song, or print), the heirs of the artist are justly entitled to a percentage of all profits exceeding the original price paid for the work.

As I have said and wish to repeat, if this matter were attended to by the authorities, we should hear less about artists leaving their families without provision.

FLORENCE, 1910–1913.

THE NEW THEME: POVERTY

IT is only quite lately, in the last few hundred years, that the beggar and poverty have become popular themes for the artist. Once upon a time it was held a vile thing to sing of pain and hungry bodies, to paint it or hew it in marble, or to groan it on musical instruments no less vile.

Rembrandt? Kings had turned away from the artist by that time, and he enthroned Poverty.

It is the wise duty of kings to do honour to the artists of their land, for when the artist finds nothing sympathetic in the idea of Royalty, he perforce turns to the extreme, and rags interest him, then absorb him, and in the terrible and in the despairing he finds something akin —— something noble.

To-day I was at a meeting of the unemployed of London. It was ugly —— terrible enough to attract the thoughts of an artist when Royalty passes him without noting his existence. The country and its rulers are sometimes apt to forget this actual existence of the artist, and I think they undervalue his power. Lands would be different and more joyous to-day if Royalty tried more to understand the artist and all he represents. If

the House of Lords should ever have its existence curtailed, it will be partly owing to this utter disregard of the arts of architecture, music and the drama, and of those who lend their force to create these arts.

LONDON, 1908.

NOTE. Recall what Lord Rosebery once said in a public speech: "Genius thrives on poverty and art is stifled by wealth." Lord Rosebery is quite a genius as a prose writer.

THE VOICE

POETRY cannot be beautifully spoken by English speakers. Even the best of them veneer the sounds with a slight monotone. The English speakers when reciting poetry seem to feel that they are upon dangerous ground, for the road of the poet leads where some nations do not like to go —— that is to say, it leads towards truth, and complete truth contains some elements which the crowd always shies at. Hence the sanctimonious faces and voices of those who declaim poetry in England; it is as if they were at some modern church function — a baptism or a burial.

"Truth is a torch," writes Goethe, "but it is a huge one. This is why we all of us try to steal past it with blinking eyes, afraid lest we may be burnt."

But there is no excuse for any artist to blink; the theatre with its sing-song reciters should practise facing the torch.

LONDON, 1908.

THEATRICAL LOVE

THE youths and maidens of the English stage have not improved in the matter of speaking poetry. They invest it with a kind of mock-prayerlike atmosphere. When a young girl tells her stage lover that she is all the world to him, she suggests that she is thinking of the world and his wife at church, and what they will say when the banns are published. Add to this a kind of tremulous sea-sickness in voice and appearance, and you have a picture of the stage maiden in a love scene. This is awful!

The young man is no better. He is a young hypocrite, not a lover, not a man. He effectually pumps up his emotion before our eyes —— horrible! —— and he seems to look more in pity than in love upon the object of his choice. The result is an impression of sensuality —— sensuality to a degree which only actors know how to suggest. The young people generally paint their faces very white, and thereby add a horror to an already horrid exhibition.

Why pale? Why quavering voice? Why this sing-song, earnest, mouth-drawn, religious fervour? A sense of fear strikes the beholder.

The man fears the girl, the girl the man; yet they proceed with their parody.

We offer this advice to stage lovers. Make the voice firm and deep. Do not sing or look like a curate. Do not pretend to be timid; why should you? Smile sometimes —— and try to look as if you were thinking and feeling the best and happiest thing in the world.

FLORENCE, 1908.

REALISM, OR NERVE-TICKLING

IS Realism illegal? Should it, when carried as far as violence, be prevented by law? Certainly, by all the laws of taste.

Only the other day the realism of the stage proved again its dangerous power. It is reported that "while Desdemona was being strangled during a performance of 'Othello' at a theatre in Lübeck, a man rose in the pit, his face purple with rage, and aimed a revolver at Othello. After he had been disarmed he explained that *he had come to the theatre for the first time in his life*, and was possessed of too chivalrous a spirit to see a woman murdered before his eyes."

The danger is not evident at first sight; it is none the less clearly inferred. The sudden death of a bad actor or two would be nothing to us. On the other hand the slow but deadly influence upon the audience which is exercised by the exhibition of deeds of violence realistically represented is a very decided danger. It is a danger just because it no longer terrifies us as it should do. We are no longer alive to, or convinced of the horror of it. If we were convinced, we should rise from our seats and endeavour to prevent the violence or revenge the victim.

But we do nothing so healthy. No; we sit still and comfortable in our rather expensive stall or dress-circle seat and enjoy the tragedy immensely. There lies the danger.

"Well, but we are not children." "Whoever takes scenes of violence seriously?" "Who wants to be convinced of the horror of such things?" These and numerous other quick and thoughtless retorts pour out of the mouths of the horror-lovers.

"But we are not horror-lovers."

Then you are worse. You are merely professed horror-haters bored to death by that which you profess to detest. Or perhaps you are not even as serious as that. You sit in the stalls in full view of the rest of the house, and as they see you accepting the murders, seductions, treacheries and all the other brutalities as a matter of course, they sit still and say nothing. Seldom is any member of the public in the cheaper seats carried away so far as to raise his revolver or even to utter a shriek. Men and women alike follow the example set them by those who sit in the better parts of the house; they refuse to be moved by the spectacle, and they quiet their nerves by saying, "How well he's pretending to do it!"

What? Does any one protest against this view? Does any one hold that the audience is moved? I say again that they are not moved. If they were moved, how could they keep their seats before such scenes? How prevent them-

selves from leaping upon the stage and destroying Iago and saving Othello from the awful tragedy? Moved? Indeed they are not moved. Their nerves are tickled, no more——and that is the danger.

FLORENCE, 1908.

THE POET AND MOTION PICTURES

MR. YEATS is a great play-writer, and without question the greatest of the Irish play-writers. I so often hear people talking of Synge and so seldom of Yeats. They all seem to have been touched by Synge's "force" ——but that in all probability is because they have read his plays.

It is different when you come, or they come, to Yeats. There they are not touched, not having read his plays. But whoever can read "On Baile's Strand" or "Cathleen ni Houlihan" and not be thrilled with the excitement of great things happening, has no blood in his body, no life in his heart.

The dramatic power of "On Baile's Strand" is of the very finest quality. The whole play is alive without any doubt; it moves, it moans, it cries——it reaches out its hands to you; and, when the tragedy has been enacted and the doors have closed, the voices wail behind the doors and, like the waves and wind, rise, fall and break their soul upon the barriers; they reach through to one's heart, they pierce the walls and drown us in a spiritual ecstacy.

Mr. Yeats has struggled with the stage. He

has called to his verse and his dramas to be at peace with the stage. He has done wrong. His dramas are not for the stage, because the stage is a lawless place where no kind of legality is valued. His plays as they were at first are as well fitted for the modern stage as are Shakespeare's plays —— that is to say, not at all.

But no amount of altering will make them fit better. A proper handling of them by a stage manager of power would make people *think* they fitted perfectly —— would fool them, for people are such dunderheads when they come to the theatre. They only want to be taken in.

Art does not take people in. Dante takes nobody in, and Bach does not deceive you. The builder of the Parthenon had no ambition to get the better of his audience, and Giotto was not concerned with cheating. Yet it is still held that we have to consider the audience in a theatre and carry them away because they come there (so it is still said) to be fooled.

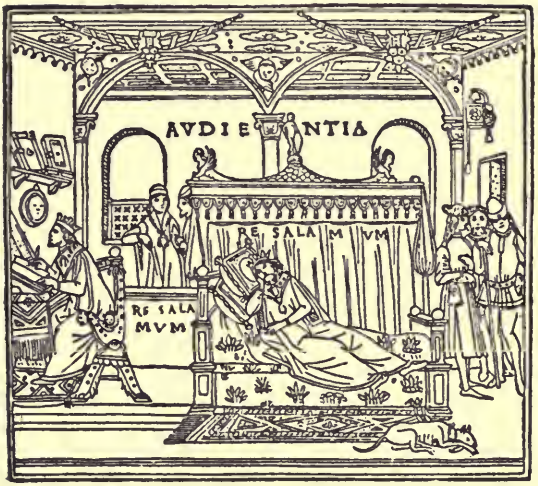
Well, then, any trick can do that trick. Imitation flames thirty feet high will thrill idiots because flames are the last things we expect to see on the stage. A crowd of girls with bare backs and legs wriggling sufficiently in half lights will do it equally well, because we are not yet used to bare backs and legs galore on the stage. But turn up the lights, make everything honest, work like an artist and not like a conjurer, and no one will care about it.

In short, unless people are shocked and deceived in a theatre they are disappointed.

Oh, wonderful idiots! Oh, wonderful theatre! How honestly you have sold yourself soul and body to every man you have met! Congratulations! But you have noticed what is coming, I suppose? You have seen and heard of Motion Pictures? I think I hear you already packing your trunks. The old days were joyous ones to what the new ones will be. You are now to experience the bitterness of having been treacherous to yourself. Afterwards you will respect the poets and yourself——nor lie to them ever again.

PARIS, 1912.

THE TRUE HAMLET



HERE we have a picture of Hamlet in the sixteenth century. It is a very nice little wood engraving, and the dual apparition and personality of the leading man is charming.

For me this is "Hamlet" far more than all the Hamlets I have seen upon the stage. The crown is a trifling inaccuracy, but, after all, how shall we know that Hamlet is regal if he wears no crown? In what a gracious way he sleeps, know-

ing how far off is Doomsday. The by-play of the supers, too, how hushed it is; they are suiting the action to the word, and the word is "Repose." Outside in the courtyard and in the other rooms maybe the Dramatis Personæ are acting to the top of their bent. How entrancing that we cannot hear them: how reassuring to know that we shall never see them! The Queen is possibly wringing her hands while she tries to remember her words; the King is doubtless rolling his eyes and his R's; Polonius is shaking his head and having the same serious trouble as ever with his long sleeves; Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are searching for Hamlet and only finding the Ghost, who still swears abominably in the cellar; Osric, Fortinbras, Horatio —— even poor Ophelia —— all are at their appointed tasks, acting as usual for all they may be worth —— and for Hecuba; but, praise be to Jove, in the next room!

Again, how delightful it is to be sure that they will not come in here to disturb our quiet with their thoughtless and extravagant chatter! All this and all their hasty actions can expend their fury upon the other unfortunates who happen to be in the next room, and all their old-fashioned quotations can hang like texts upon those walls —— not on these. Here can only come those things which are never quoted, never seen. For here dwells the soul of Hamlet with the part of Hamlet left out —— and not found wanting.

Yes, truly, should I ever have the good fortune

to be called upon at a moment's notice to play "Hamlet", I too shall wear a crown; I too shall murmur under my breath "To be or not to be" in that propped-up position. I shall seem to be talking in my sleep——"To die, to sleep, perchance to dream——" At other times I shall assume the desire to turn to studies, and, seated at that table (even as the assumed King Salamum is doing), I shall meander on, how actors are to speak their speeches nor make the judicious grieve.—— Well, it will be the first cultured performance of the noble and disheartening play.

FLORENCE, 1908.

But rest assured—sleep tranquilly, spectators, sleep—for this will never occur.

THE FUTURISTS

"And when I love thee not, chaos is come again."
SHAKESPEARE.

WHAT is a Futurist? Who knows and who can explain without making us angry or without sending us to sleep? I for one cannot, of that I feel sure. Because I think I can explain the phenomenon of the Futurists, and I think my explanation will convict more than a hemisphere of people, and that it is bound to make some angry and to weary others.

The history of this group of poets and painters and others is unknown to us. We know that a certain young man, Signor Marinetti, is their leader. Who inspired Signor Marinetti is at present a secret; it is often that we find the original man, back of the leader, only about fifteen years later in the game.

Of Signor Marinetti much is obscure. He is a wealthy young man who has not had too much responsibility and therefore is inexperienced in some of the simplest things —— no doubt to his regret. He has published a quantity of literature —— poems, prose poems, essays —— and has probably been able to pay well for the verses and

prose submitted to him by the younger Italian writers.

This seems to me the first point in favour of Signor Marinetti. It is pleasant to know that with the birth of Futurism at least twenty or thirty more living writers are in a position to pay for their clothes and food. The question of money is not usually reckoned into the account, but that is because reckless people like Lord Rosebery are reported to go about preaching that penury produces the best poems and prose. Oh, my Lord! for shame!

And possibly Signor Marinetti's gold is badly spent; probably the work of the Futurists is abominable art.

That may be or may not be. A fairly rich man can be just as good an artist as one who is harassed to find two pounds to get along with for the coming fortnight [1] —— but let us get on.

Signor Marinetti, having published much literature, goes further and exhibits a number of paintings; and these have been seen in London and in Paris.

Every one thought that the previous group called the "Post-Impressionists" had given the "world of art" —— by the bye, who coined this title? —— a shock which was to last them for a long time. But the appearance of the Futurists has staggered them all far more.

[1] "Cats of good breed hunt better fat than lean."
Vita di Benvenuto Cellini.

At Bernheim's in Paris Signor Marinetti was good enough to speak before an assembly of Parisians, who, as we all know, are the kindest of people and interest themselves in all sorts of difficult conundrums. After he had spoken, saying that all the pictures and the other miracles of genius at the Louvre ought to be burnt because they were bad, an amiable gentleman rose and asked him whether he had ever examined the works at the Louvre. On this it appears that Signor Marinetti kicked him. There was an uproar, the police were called in, and the room was cleared.

Now all this agrees admirably with what I am sure is the exact explanation of this extraordinary uprising known as Futurism. Most of those who speak or write about this group of artists search for some complicated explanation. They get no nearer to truth. All of them connect the phenomenon with art, whereas it has no connection with art.

This is not written in any antagonistic spirit whatever. There has been a positive *need* for the Futurists ever since the first ass wagged its tail before the portrait of a carrot.

The name Futurist is a mask under which the most up-to-date reformers approach their prelude of destruction. He who laughs at them laughs at the whole farcical fabric of modern life. He who criticises them must first criticise modern civilization; in short, if the Futurists are damnable

——and they are——then modern life is damnable.

How paradoxical you people are![1] How gullible you are, how weak and how comic! Now watch yourselves.

You dress in the silliest of costumes——uncomfortable, stiff, unprepossessing——except to the handsomest of people, and they'd look lovely in anything. You are not obliged to dress in that way, and you don't do it because you want to. You do it because "every one" does it.

After you have dressed yourselves up like monkeys you catch hold of some one——a man, or a woman, or a child——and you drag them out into the street with you. You do this in a civilized way and it looks easy and natural. The tyranny of dependence is never natural.

When you get out into the street what do you do? Do you burst out laughing? Do you run terrified into the house again? Or do you lose your reason and become mad? No, you swim there like ducks.

On every side of you shrill noises like the horns of Hell and a murmur like a Satanic choir. Around you the flashing by of objects lawfully

[1] Art still lives. Walking in the shadow it passes unharmed for all the bubble and the trouble still brewing in the abyss of Life . . . brewed by the Materialist Fool. Art still lives on as it flourished once—in the Idealists. In an earlier age it was they who made Life look and sound like what it was and is and ever will be—beautiful. They did this because they loved the earth and you—but you slowly tired of the truth and asked for different things: you asked for lies. You have them now: they will sober you to a certainty: but it is you who will have to pay for them.

let loose to damn the day and to make night hideous. High up in the sky sweet things concerning Pills and Milk, and beyond them the little flying ships of the true Futurists parodying the birds.

And you get into a brutality called a Taximeter and you say, "Drive to Bernheim's." You shout at each other all the way so as to be heard, and on arriving at the picture gallery you get out, and if you're great swells you haggle with the driver over twopence. You probably have him arrested by a policeman on account of this twopence, and then you enter the Gallery of Futurist Paintings.

At sight of the first picture you burst out laughing; at the second you almost run terrified away; and at the third you nearly lose your reason. The Futurists have shown you the external world you live in —— and you hate them for it. Naturally.

But why didn't you think of that before? Why didn't you protest against your world being cut up into noises, jerks and squirms? Had you done so it might have prevented the war —— and it would have prevented Futurism.

You didn't notice it, you say? I know; that's exactly what I'm getting at. You have been cheated slowly day after day for centuries; cheated by a great fool[1] who had a knack for saving you trouble. We call him the business man. You'll do anything to save yourself trouble, and so you'll overlook the gradual

[1] "The fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God.'" That is the fool alluded to.

catastrophe which is creeping upon you. It is only when you get a picture of it that you revolt. The nerve has been touched at last.

Poor dear people, thinking all the while of yourselves instead of the others, you have become self-sufficient——just that and no more ——and a very little mentality is sufficient for yourselves. All the Futurists together make up one terrific and sinister grimace. What a monster to have given birth to!

So, all the King in man is gone, all his royalty gone. Like poor Lear he has divided his kingdom and given it away to his daughters.

Blow, winds, and crack your cheeks! rage! blow!
You cataracts, and hurricanoes, spout
Till you have drench'd our steeples, drown'd the cocks!
You sulph'rous and thought-executing fires,
Vaunt-couriers to oak-cleaving thunder bolts,
Singe my white head! And thou, all-shaking thunder,
Strike flat the thick rotundity o' the world!
Crack nature's moulds, all germins spill at once
That makes ungrateful man!

Rumble thy bellyfull! Spit, fire! spout, rain!
Nor rain, wind, thunder, fire, are my daughters;
I tax not you, you Elements, with unkindness;
I never gave you kingdom, call'd you Children,
You owe me no subscription: then let fall
Your horrible pleasure; here I stand, your slave,
A poor, infirm, weak and despised old man. . . .

On this spectacle of to-day's misery, seen by a prophet from afar, let us quietly lower the curtain.

PARIS, 1912.

FIRE! FIRE!

ONLY two theatres in Europe offer security to their visitors; that at Bayreuth and the Prinz Regenten at Munich.

And who have you to thank for these theatres? The Police? the Government? Patriotism? the Church? the Doctors? the Actors? the Architects? No, not one of these. You have to thank an artist who you denied the possession of any knowledge of the subject. Oh, what bright intelligences you reveal, my friends! You do your best to let yourself be burnt every time you enter those old balcony theatres with their twisting passages, and you do this rather than admit that the artist is the wisest man of the whole community and knows what he is talking about.

Well, go on doing so. Intrigue, and set yourselves and your children on fire. It is the best way of serving us in the end. But do not complain about it later, for it is your own fault.

Richard Wagner designed you a theatre years ago which was the only safe theatre in Europe. Munich copied the design——all honour to Munich! As for the other State and private theatres in Europe, they are all utterly unsafe and dangerous to the public. We would respectfully

draw the attention of the fire inspectors of all theatres to our statement, especially to the illogical gentlemen who close safe places while leaving the dangerous ones open. Iron curtains sometimes act: sometimes, as in the case of the Meiningen Theatre, they give way and fall on the audience. But if you are able to dodge the curtain, you will anyhow be caught in the twisting passages, fall down the little staircases (just consider Drury Lane, or the Royal Theatre at Moscow, St. Petersburg, Vienna or Berlin), or be baulked by closed doors, or impeded by the draped curtains at the corners. These so-called theatres are nothing more than death-traps made after the most stupid design. It is a farce to close a few small buildings on the plea that they are dangerous on account of fire, and licence all the hundreds of State and private crematoriums.

When will it be realised that Wagner's design is the only safe pattern existing on which to build a theatre for artists? We can answer that question. It will only be realised when the theatre ceases to be a shop, and this will only come about when the snobs and intriguers are hustled off the stage by the young and vigorous generation which now begins to win back, not only the liberty of the Theatre's Art, but the ancient nobility of the Theatre as an institution.

This young generation is united by the closest ties——those of sentiment and understanding ——and we may expect at any moment to hear of

a practical development of their position, the formation of a league or society which shall be independent of all accident —— the union of the Artists of the Theatre to protect their trust.

FLORENCE, 1908.

THE LONG PLAY

THE idea of a long play is becoming daily more unbearable to us. It is a burden to think of a play with three, four or five acts, and continual speech during these acts; intolerable to the audience to hear, for their ears refuse the strain; intolerable for the artists to write, because it has become a strain. No longer is there impulse to hear or to write freshly.

Turn and regard the audience as they sit before the outpourings of Wotan —— his whole conversation so interesting, if it were only a book of reference and published by subscription.

Turn and regard the audience as they listen to the long soliloquies of Hamlet, Macbeth or King Lear.

Indeed, are they not bored to death? Then no longer can it be right to tease them in this way. Art, if not an entertainment, is surely a refreshment —— No?

FLORENCE, 1908.

THEATRE MANAGER OR STAGE MANAGER?

WHEN critics write in the journals of "Mr. Dashmann's production of such and such a play", they create in the public mind the impression that Mr. Dashmann really has produced a play himself, that he is responsible for the good and bad ideas which crop up now and then during the performance, and that the "picture", "grouping", "business", etc., is the work of his hand and brain.

It is not. Therefore it is incorrect to speak of Mr. Dashmann's "production" of this or that play, because the credit is not Mr. Dashmann's, only the cash is his; and being in many things of an Eastern turn of mind, he is content to take it, "and let the credit go."

Therefore, Gentlemen of the Press, be so good as to give the credit of these productions in future to the stage managers. And also be careful to give the credit to the right stage manager. There are generally two, and sometimes a third.

Let us suppose that Herr Reinhardt, for instance, is too busy with other things to be able to devote himself to the actual stage management, and so calls in the assistance of Herr Vallentin.

Very good then; give Herr Vallentin the credit of the production of the play which he has actually produced. I understand that it was to him we owed the production of "Nachtasyl" —— produced by Professor Reinhardt.

And do not forget his assistant. His assistant is the man who sees to it that the ropes don't foul, that the curtain does not tear, that the gauzes do not catch nor the platforms give way. He it is who sees that the actors are not late and the supers not unwashed. He keeps the watch, and the play commences and ends to time if he is a capable assistant. He is not an artist, but unless he is a disciplinarian the play may easily be a failure.

Therefore when you criticise the production of the play, should you not be doubly careful to bear in mind that there are two or more men behind the curtain acting as stage manager?

If there is a wait between the acts of fifteen minutes, do not accuse the artists of this. Make a savage attack upon the under stage manager, the man who holds the watch and is supposed to be a capable manipulator of even the most difficult scenes, and a capable controller of the vastest of stage crowds.

On the other hand, if the scenes are ugly, do not lay the blame on the wrong man. Then it is that the artist should come in for your censure. Theatrical critics are greatly at fault for not ascertaining who is responsible and who is not.

I am inclined to suggest that the critics — not reporters — should be invited to visit an important production during the rehearsals whenever they wish, so that they might be able to see where the weak places in stage production come in. Seeing for themselves, they would be the better able to criticise, not only the results, but the methods which lead to those results.

FLORENCE, 1908.

A NOTE ON APPLAUSE

IN the Moscow Art Theatre applause plays a very minor rôle. In general no play can live without it. In Moscow no actor takes a call before the curtain: hence there is no applause.

READER: Isn't that very dull?

WRITER: You think so; Moscow doesn't. It is all a matter of the point of view. When the acting is poor, an enthusiastic roaring and thundering audience is necessary to keep up the spirits; but when the acting is absorbing, applause is not needed; and if the actor won't come and bow, or the curtain rise after it has once fallen —— well, then, applause becomes futile.

READER: Who ever heard of such an idea?

WRITER: My dear Reader, it is not an idea, it is an established fact. Remove the reason for applause, and you prevent the applause itself, and in doing so prevent a vulgarity.

READER: But it is the natural desire to want to applaud when you see something good.

WRITER: Rather is it an unnatural habit. You do not applaud a thing, only a man or a woman. Applause is the flattery of the strong by the weak.

If the conductor and musicians of an orchestra were not seen we should never applaud music.

We do not applaud architecture, painting, sculpture or literature. We should not applaud hidden musicians.

It is only when the poet appears that we suddenly become excited through fear of the superior force of the man —— we scent a danger —— we burst out into applause. We do not applaud the Atlantic Ocean or the poems of the ocean, but catching sight of the man who can swim furthest in that ocean, we utter birdlike and beastlike cries. What barbarism! The air and the poems of the air leave us calm —— but the aeroplanist we greet with enthusiasm. We feel it is better for us to be friends with such a man. Applause is the gross expression of our fear and envy awakened by the sight of a man in a position unattainable. The sooner applause is banished from the theatre [1] the better for actors and audience. The way partly to prevent it is to leave the curtain down at the end of each act, and not raise it again until the beginning of the next act, and to give up the bad practise of the actor appearing before the curtain.

READER: But the audience want it; they want to see their favourites again and again.

WRITER: Then let there be a new kind of zoo, with men and women on view in the cages.

Moscow, 1909.

[1] Or to the end of the play as in Greece.

ART AND THE MILLIONAIRE

IN one of the official organs of the English Theatre, I once came across the following hoarse cry:

"*Things are at such a pass in England that none but the Millionaire can afford to be purely artistic.*"

Now, what does this mean? The passage was spread by a famous daily, and thereby more than a million people are told that no one can afford to be purely artistic except the millionaire. As if a man could be purely artistic by the grace of his millions! What does it mean? It reads like nonsense, and yet I suppose there must be something in it. And yet again there seems to be nothing in it, for I know at least three people in England possessed of about twenty-four pounds sterling and a few tables and chairs, and who are yet entirely what can be described as "artistic."

It is quite extraordinary how a certain set of men in responsible journalistic positions become utterly confused as to the reason of art, the means of bringing it about, and the kind of person who brings it about.

Does the writer of the bright phrase perhaps mean that only a millionaire can afford to buy

works of art because in England works of art are so expensive? If so this statement is entirely false. It is only works of extremely bad taste that are very expensive——expensive from every point of view.

Thus, in the theatre, we have a vulgar showy performance which costs, we are assured by the manager, ten thousand pounds; whereas a beautiful production on the stage can cost far less than this if artists and good sound craftsmen are employed all the year round for a round number of years.

The worst part of theatrical affairs in regard to productions in England is that the manager puts his job into the hands of "Firms."

These firms are very excellent and reliable in all matters pertaining to yards and inches, and these firms also know how to charge so that their establishments shall be a success. All this is very creditable to them, but it is disastrous to the theatre.

What the managers have never understood is that they should engage their stage managers, their scenic artists, their costumers, their artistic advisers and all connected with the different works which are to be produced year after year in the same theatre, should take them into the theatre, and should never go to any other people outside. These people would then all work hand in hand, would be as practical as any firm, and, what is more, they would perhaps, through the gifts of

one special artist in the theatre, come to produce with great taste.

This is the system which is beginning to be general in some few of the first theatres in Europe, and it works extremely satisfactorily. Every one in the theatre is then more contented, and they are able to produce works of a better quality, and to produce any plays they wish without consulting the public, and without dread of bankruptcy.

FLORENCE, 1909.

DIVINE DEMONSTRATION

"Art is an interpreter of the inexpressible; and therefore it seems a folly to try to convey its meaning afresh by means of words."

GOETHE.

BEAUTY——or Divine Demonstration——knows no confusion. It has the perfect balance. It remains true once and for ever——needs no proof——can reveal itself without words or arguments——and when we see it, we again see Paradise. It is the dear Heaven.

Science or human demonstration continually calling upon proof, trusting in many words, is as an unsettled balance which continually rises and falls with the uncertainty of centuries——the restless terror——it has become the only evil.

To be beautiful, religions must not ask for proof——must not rest upon knowledge nor rely upon the word. Three Arts——Music, Architecture and Movement——together form the one great and perfect religion in which we may see and hear all the revelations of Truth. The evil prophesied long ago in Babel has separated these three Arts and left the world without a belief——dividing the Occident from

the Orient, State from State and man from man. When these three Arts shall once again be united, concord shall come again. Then re-birth —— the first and final one!

Look then with your eyes upon all diagrams, and let them show what they will to your imagination; but call for no proof as to their construction, for at night in the midst of proof comes unnoticed a little error no bigger than a grain of sand, and the whole building is then annihilated. But if you look upon them as lines of strength and lines of grace you can have faith until the end —— you will not be deceived nor even disappointed. For truly, is a circle merely "a plane figure bounded by one line called the circumference and such that all straight lines drawn from a certain point within it called the centre to the circumference are equal?" Is it not less than this —— less intricate? And is it not far more —— more round? Is it not indeed Beauty's perfection? And a square? Is it not the strength of that perfection?

Yet though words tells us that a square is "a quadrilateral figure all of whose sides are equal and one of whose angles is a right angle", look upon the diagram itself and you will see that it is something more than that. For it is the *word* which has destroyed each religion in its turn; and it is the word, that restless atom of knowledge, which begins to eat into Beauty to destroy it if it can. For pure beauty is silent beauty, and

silence must return and surround the arts for a while before they shall become whole again.

And have we done words some injustice? That must not be. Is speech so wholly evil? Have words failed utterly in their trust? Have they sold Love for the value of an argument? Let it be seen by the issue that this is not wholly so. Let silence and divine imagery heal all—— give back even to knowledge its wholesomeness by restoring the just value of its beautiful words.

Walt Whitman sings:

"I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contained;
I stand and look at them long.
They do not sweat and whine about their condition,
They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins,
They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God."

And so it seems to me also. Yet I think that *if they could speak* it would be more often to complain, to whine, weep and discuss than to sing and accept. For if they could speak, a dangerous power would inhabit them. But whatever we may believe, we know that their silence produces the impression of content, and what inspiration we receive from that impression! At all times and in all places it is the animals that continually impress us; the effect is instantaneous and we are always convinced by their seeming wisdom, their beauty.

It may be truthfully said of man too that when

he is most impressed he is silent, and that when he is silent he impresses us most. We must surround the people with symbols——in silence——in silence we will reveal the movement of things. This is the nature of our Art—the Art of the Theatre.

FLORENCE, 1908.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

So discreet shall be the appendix that I will not print a word of what our traducers say.

Besides, you cannot do better than buy their books; they are worth reading and they do not bear being read in extracts. Do not be cross with me.

APPENDIX B

(1) Page 101

"I saw the marionettes of the Rue Vivienne twice, and was immensely pleased. I am infinitely grateful to them for taking the place of living actors. To speak frankly I must say that actors spoil plays for me. I mean good actors. The others I can still tolerate! But it is the fine artists such as one sees at the Comédie Française whom decidedly I cannot bear! Their talent is too great; it covers everything! There is nought but them. . . ."

"I have already made the confession that I love marionettes, and those of M. Signoret please me particularly. It is artists who construct them; poets who show them. They have the

naïve grace, the divine awkwardness of statues consenting to be dolls, and one is enchanted to see these little idols play at acting.

". . . These marionettes are like Egyptian hieroglyphics, that is, like something mysterious and pure, and when they perform a play of Shakespeare or of Aristophanes I seem to see the thought of the poet unrolling itself in sacred characters upon the walls of a temple."

"It is hardly an hour ago that the curtain of the *Petit Théatre* fell upon the harmonious group of Ferdinand and Miranda. I am still under the spell, and, as Prospero says, I 'yet taste some subtilties o' the isle.' What a charming spectacle! And how true it is that exquisite things, when they are naïve, are doubly exquisite."

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